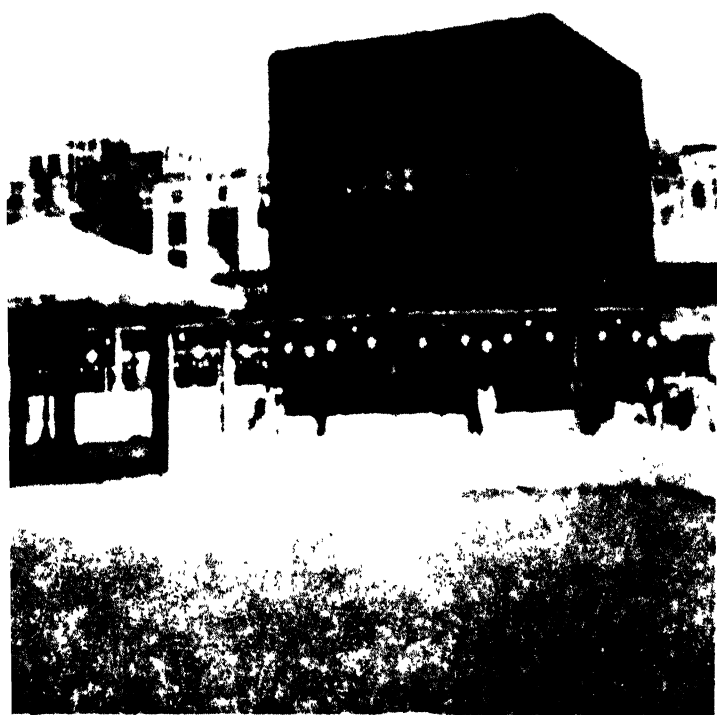


THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA



THE KAABA AT MEKKA

Frontispiece

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA

By
ELDON RUTTER

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PREFACE

IN the month of May, 1925, I was in Cairo, having determined upon making a journey into Arabia. I planned to visit Mekka, to perform the rites of the Muhammadan pilgrimage there; and having accomplished that, to visit El Medîna, where lies the tomb of Muhammad.

At this time war was in active progress throughout the province or kingdom of El Hijâz. In the month of Safar, 1343 A.H.—September, 1924—the forces of the Sultân Abdul Azîz Ibn Sa'ûd, sovereign lord of Nejd and of Eastern Arabia, had occupied the great upland oasis of Et-Tâif, which lies in a wide hollow among the jagged crests of Jebel Kura, at a distance of fifteen or twenty hours mule-journey to the south-eastward of Mekka. Having sacked this town and massacred a large number of its defenceless inhabitants, Ibn Sa'ûd's Wahnâbîs, clothed in the ihrâm or pilgrim garb, had subsequently entered Mekka, which they occupied without bloodshed or violence. The Hâshimite King of the Hijâz, El Husayn, had abdicated the throne in favour of his son, the Sharîf Ali; and the latter, having retreated to Jidda, was besieged there by the Wahnâbî forces. El Medîna and its port, Yanbua, were still in the hands of the Hâshimite Government, but they too were invested by the besieging arms of Ibn Sa'ûd. All the Hijâzi ports were closed as far as the passage of normal traffic was concerned—El Wejh, Yanbua, and Jidda were besieged; and El Lîth and El Gunfuda, to the southward of Jidda, being already in the occupa-

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tion of the Wahhâbîs, had been placed under blockade by the Hâshimite Amîr. The active blockade precautions consisted of spasmodic visits by a decrepit steam launch armed with a small gun; and, from all I could gather, it struck me that it would be easier to flout this "blockade" than to steal through the Wahhâbî patrols about Jidda or Yanbua. The former was, in fact, the course which I ultimately pursued.

The Egyptian Government, having obtained the fatwa (judicial decision) of the 'ulemâ* to the effect that the pilgrimage was not obligatory upon the Muslims while the roads to Mekka were in the contentious occupation of hostile armies, had decided against sending, that year, its annual mission with the covering for the Kaaba and the mahmal. In consequence of this decision, the timid Egyptians to a man shunned the danger of attempting the Hajj. "If we cannot go this year we will go another year to Mekka, if God wills." "God does not impose an obligation upon His slaves save that which it is within their power to perform." Such were the philosophical and pious remarks which one heard in the mosques, the coffee houses, and the bazaars of Cairo.

For my part, I was probably better able than my Egyptian friends to interpret correctly the meaning of the word "war" as between two princes in the economically poorest country in the world, and to gauge its significance as a deterrent force to a neutral and sufficiently determined traveller. There was little to be learnt in Cairo, however, which would be likely to assist one in forming a definite plan of action. I therefore decided to push my way forward from point to point, in whatever manner circumstances might seem

* The religious heads of the community.

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to favour or to dictate, until I should reach my objective.

A short time before the day which I had appointed for leaving Cairo, I had followed to the grave-side the bier of one who had been in life a singularly amiable youth of a manly frankness of disposition somewhat unusual in town Arabs, one Nûr ed-Dîn Shargâwi, a native of Mekka, who was to have been my companion in my Arabian travels. I had never doubted that Nûr-ed-Dîn would be hard to replace, and I was not mistaken. As a result of his loss at a time so close to the date of my departure from Egypt, I was obliged to set out quite alone, and to travel alone save for chance acquaintances whom I met in the way.

In transliterating Arabic words into the Latin character, I have, in most cases, followed the conventional spelling of words familiar to the English reader; and have endeavoured to present unfamiliar words in such a form that an English-speaking person, reading them aloud, may pronounce them nearly as the original. This has involved me in a good deal of experiment; and, in the result, it will be observed by Arabic scholars that the same Arabic letter is not invariably represented by a constant English equivalent. I have rendered the word "Allah" as "Ollawh" in two places only, where I wish to emphasise the true pronunciation of this word in the mouths of the Arabs.

For permission to use the illustrations reproduced in this book, with the single exception of the frontispiece, I am indebted to His Excellency General Ibrahim Pasha Rifaat of Cairo.

E. R.

GLOSSARY

emîr	Commander, prince
caftân	{ Egyptian robe with long sleeves, open at the front: worn under the jubba
cantâr	About 1 cwt.
casîda	{ Romantic tale of religious interest
delul	Fast riding-camel
fellahîn (sing. fellâh)	Peasants
hajj	Pilgrimage
hâjj, hâjji	Pilgrim
in shâ Allah	If God wills
kibla	{ Opposite point: direction towards which the Muslim turns in prayer, i.e. the Great Mosque at Mekka
mâ shâ Allah	{ That which God wills (must be)! used to denote admiration
mejlis	Assembly
miskîn	poor, unfortunate
riyâl	Silver coin
riyâl mejîdi (Turkish)	About 2 shillings
riyâl franza (Maria Teresa dollar)	{ About 3 shillings
riyâl masri (Egyptian)	About 4 shillings
shaykh	{ Elder, chief, professor, old man
yâ akhi	O my brother!

LESS KNOWN PLACE NAMES

Abtah	الأبطح	Judayyida	الجديدة
'Agîg	العقيق	Khandarîsa	الخندريسة
'Aynîya	العينية	Khuls	خلص
Balât	البلاط	Khurga	الخركة
Birk	برك	Kurr	الكر
Dôga	دوقة	Mathnâ	المثنى
Duhbân	دهبان	Muâbda	المعابدة
Falg	الفلق	Muddaâ	المدعى
Gahm	القحم	Mudhaylif	المضيلف
Garâra	القرارة	Nagâ	النقا
Gashâshîya	القشاشية	Najî'a	نجيعة
Gaym	القيم	Rakûba	الركوبة
Ghazza	الغزة	Sâh	الساح
Gudayra	القديرة	Sâha	الساحة
Gudhayma	القضية	Shaddâd	شداد
Hada	الهداء	Shahrîya	الشهرة
Hajla	الحجلة	Shubayka	الشبيكة
Halaga	الحلقة	Sulb	صلب
'Imaq	عمق	Suwayga	السويقة
Jarwal	جرول	'Ugushîya	العقشية
Jiyâd	جياذ	Wajha	الوجهة
Jowdhariya	الجوضرية	Yebba	يتبى

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مكتبة المكيّة

I

SUEZ TO MASSOWA

IT was midday on the 20th of May, 1925. Looking out of the railway carriage window I could see, some miles ahead, a large number of cubic objects of differing sizes strewn or flung haphazard upon the desert sand. They might have been gigantic packing cases—many of them white, some pink, some yellow. They were the houses of Suez.

In a few minutes more the train was crawling slowly alongside the platform, and as it came to a stop I called to a shabby-looking person who was standing there dressed in a gallabîya—a garment similar to the English night-shirt—a jacket, and a tarbûsh. He was one of the touts who are never absent from the principal railway stations of Egypt—and very useful they are. The Egyptian tout will do, or agree to do, anything you like. As far as history tells us he has never attempted to steal the Great Pyramid, but that may be because he has never had the matter proposed to him.

The tout, upon observing me, approached with alacrity and entered the railway compartment. I was dressed in the style of an Egyptian effendi; that is to say I wore an European suit of clothes with a tarbûsh as headgear.

"Peace be upon you," said he. "How is your presence?"

"Well. Praise be to God," I replied.

"Welcome!" said he cordially.

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"Well met to you," I rejoined.

The tout, who looked disreputable, had been followed into the train by another little man who looked extremely disreputable. The latter, at a sign from the former, promptly shouldered my saddle-bags which were my only luggage. The saddle-bags contained several books, all of them being Arabic, including a Korân and a history of Mekka; a small camera, a compass, a pocket aneroid, and a supply of clothes of the style worn by religious shaykhs in Egypt—cotton shirt (*gamîs*), cotton drawers (*libâs* or *sirwâl*), cotton gown (*gallabîya*), cloth robe (*jubba*), and turban cloth (*shâl*). I carried a small revolver in my pocket, and a supply of cartridges in a belt worn under my clothing.

"I want a *hâjji* lodging-house, O my brother," I said.

"I know you do," replied my new friend affably. "Come to us; I will show you. Your presence is a *hâjji*, not so?"

"Yes, and I want to travel without delay," I replied.

"Ask blessings on the Prophet," said he in order to stop my speaking so that he himself might have a clear field. The lower classes in Egypt make use of the Korânic injunction to "ask blessings and the salutation of peace on the Prophet" for this purpose. In the midst of an argument one will say to another, "Ask blessings on the Prophet!" and while his companion, as in duty bound, says "O God! bless him," the first man is able to vociferate his point without interruption.

"O God! bless him," I said in response to the tout's prompting.

"We want you to be pleased, if God wills," he said.

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"That it is which concerns us. We are your servants. There are no steamers to Jidda because of the war. It is not possible that you go to Jidda nor Yanbua nor El Wejh, but some Turks and Moors went down to Massowa, and from Massowa they went to El Gunfuda." This is on the Arabian coast about half-way between Jidda and El Hodayda.

While he had been talking we were walking through the quiet little old-fashioned town. The guide now stopped before a ramshackle two-storeyed house. We entered the low doorway saying "Bismillah, In the Name of God," and, proceeding through a passage, the guide led the way up a rickety flight of stairs. Arrived at the top, he turned.

"You like to go into this room with the Moors, or take a room for the one of you?" he asked in a discreet voice, the door of the Moorish stronghold being ajar.

"There is a woman with them: I heard her voice," I said in a slightly shocked tone. "Give me a room to myself, O my brother."

"Present!" said he. "We want to see you pleased. As long as you are pleased, we are pleased. You are a pilgrim in the way of God, and we are your servants."

"God bless you," I said.

"In the Name of God," said he, pushing at a door of a style which is more usually found in garden fences or in barns than in the interiors of houses.

"Here is the best room in the house, O Effendi! Do me the favour! Enter!" he said with the magnanimous confidence of one who offers rare delights.

The room, some eight feet square, was half filled by an iron bedstead with wooden boards upon it but no mattress. A piece of rush matting on the floor completed its furniture. A window, or square glassless aperture,

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two feet square and barred with iron, looked onto the flat sunlit roofs of many one-storeyed hovels.

"The water is there," proceeded my host, pointing down the passage, "and anything you want—food, or drink, or things from the market—we will bring them—anything."

"Good!" I said. "If you will ask about boats to El Gunfuda, I shall be favoured."

"With all pleasure," he replied. "This is the porter who carried your luggage," he continued apologetically.

I placed a piece of money in the porter's outstretched hand. The hand, however, remained outstretched and the porter expostulated:

"We carried your luggage, and its weight is sixty cantârs, from the station to the end of the world. What is this?"

The tout looked blandly on. I gave the porter another half-piastre.

"Go, O my brother. Allah make it easy for you," I said.

"For you and for us, if it please Allah," said the porter as he shuffled away.

"Now you would like to pray—naturally," said the tout as he approached the door to go out. "Any service you want, we are ready—any service."

"Good," I said. "God bless you."

By good fortune, a little Italian steamer was due to sail for El Cosayr, Port Sudan, and Massowa at daylight the next morning. Refusing the tout's offer of his company and assistance, I went and took a second-class passage to Massowa.

Early the next morning I left Suez by train for Port Tewfik. Suez is a quiet rambling old town with low

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picturesque little houses, and here and there little green squares of public garden. For two periods of a month or so each year the town is crowded with life, while the hâjjis are going to Mekka and again when they return. Usually some fifteen thousand Egyptians go to Mekka annually, but this year there were none. The town lies on the desert at about two miles distance to the westward of Port Tewfik, which is at the entrance of the Suez Canal. A railway and a road, laid on a narrow causeway across the shallow head of the Gulf of Suez, connect the two towns.

On boarding the steamer, I found the Moors from my lodging-house already installed there as deck passengers. Two of them were arguing stressfully with a learned-looking shaykh wearing gold-rimmed spectacles. My tout, who was also there, informed me that the spectacled one was the "Chief Interpreter" of Suez.

Apparently the man who had brought the Moors' luggage down to the wharf wanted to charge them more than they were willing to pay; and when they refused he appealed to the Chief Interpreter—according to plan.

This redoubtable one handled the matter with complete ease, giving an exhibition of interpreting worthy of the greatest admiration. He first preached the Moors a fatherly sermon, taking as his subject the sacredness of the ordinance of pilgrimage, upon which they were now embarked. Skilfully and piously he stressed the important point that the more money they spent while "in the way of God" the more acceptable would be their pilgrimage and the greater their eternal reward.

"Your good works while in the Hajj are worth many times more than good works at other times, O my

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brethren!" he concluded, "and your recording angels will write them down to you accordingly. Pay forty piastres to this poor cart-driver. He is a good man." Here he gently squeezed the coins out of the unwilling fist of the leader of the Moors. Then, wise physician, seeing, from the wry faces of his patients, that the medicine of his interpreting was bitter to their taste, he pulled each of them quickly round, one after another by the shoulder, so that they faced in the direction of the Kibla (Mekka), and raising his open hands palms upwards before him, he made supplication to God:

"O God! bless the Muslim men and the Muslim women.

"O God! bless the pious men and the pious women.

"O God! bless those who give alms from the provision which Thou hast appointed to them.

"O God! bless those who strive in Thy way.

"O God! bless the hâjjis from Egypt, and from Turkey, and from the Sudan, and from India—from the Eastern places of the earth and from its western confines, and especially the Moors.

"O God! Grant that the pilgrimage of Thy pious slaves, these Moors, be acceptable unto Thee."

This was the spoonful of jam after the dose of bitter physic, and at the end of every sentence the Moors said "O God! Âmîn!"

The average Oriental, although he will frequently accuse an absent person of hypocrisy, seems to be quite incapable of distinguishing it from real piety.

The steamer sailed before noon in a sea as smooth as a sheet of blue glass. Behind us, to the northward, lay the desert—the sky above it turned to yellow by the powerful glare reflected from its naked face. In the far

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distance, to the eastward, the mountains of Sinai loomed dimly behind the shimmering heat-haze which rose from the intervening plain. On our right hand, to westward, the massive pink-and-purple buttresses of the mountains bordering the Gulf rose sheer out of the rich blue-green somnolence of the waters. Nature alone may wear such contrasts of vivid colour without jarring the sense.

My only fellow-passenger in the second-class saloon was an Italian. A man of a pleasant enough temper, his life was apparently made up of a series of long spells of pearl-shell trading in Massowa, and of short spells of pleasure-making in Paris, which used up the proceeds of the trading spells.

The chief man among the Moors, a merchant of Algiers, was accompanied by his wife, who was swathed in white linen and closely veiled. She sat or lay on the hatch-cover among the half-a-dozen men with no sign of embarrassment. I had noticed her standing outside the lodging-house in Suez on the previous day, watching two Egyptians at a table playing draughts. Her husband ordered her peremptorily to go inside, but she remained as she was without moving an inch. The Moor, in low tones, said with a bitter face: "There is no power and no strength save in God," and, sitting down resignedly on a chair before the door, lit a cigarette.

On the following afternoon the steamer arrived at El Cosayr, where a few stores were landed. Westward of El Cosayr the Nile flows nearer to the Red Sea coast than at any other point of its course. Kena, on the Nile, is about a hundred miles from this little port, and, from time immemorial, Egyptian grain has been carried on camels from thence to El Cosayr for shipment

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to Arabia. This is also one of the old hâjj routes. Pilgrims from Egypt and the Sudan, and from all North Africa and many more-distant parts of the Muhammadan world, would gather at Kena and the adjacent villages of Cûs and Caft, and passing the desert by camel to El Cosayr or Ídâb, would cross the Red Sea in dhows to El Wejh or Yanbua or Jidda.

The Moorish traveller, Ibn Jubayr, who performed the pilgrimage in 580 A.H., gives a vivid account of the perils which pilgrims encountered on this route—chiefly on account of the rascality of the Egypto-Berberine tribe of Jubâh which inhabits these deserts. Another Moor, Ibn Battûta, a prince among travellers, also attempted to pass this way in the eighth century of the Hijra, but was obliged to turn back from Ídâb because the cut-throat tribesmen had destroyed all the dhows, in the course of a quarrel between themselves and a Turkish expedition.

The little collection of stone-built houses which is El Cosayr stands on a rocky shore unrelieved by vegetation. It is backed by craggy hills of bare rock, and in the far distance to the southward loom the peaks of a lofty range of mountains.

We heard from a boatman here that Jidda was open, as the Amîr Ali had surrendered the town to the Wahhâbîs. This proved to be false, but at the time it cheered the hâjjis considerably.

Two days later we reached Port Sudan, where we found a sand-storm blowing. The world is a very desolate place when one is in a sand-storm. In place of the blue sky and the distant view there is nothing but impenetrable dust. For the time being one is in a living tomb. Though the earth be lightly packed about you, yet it is there. You are completely entombed.

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At Port Sudan is the finest harbour on the Red Sea. Its advantages were realised only quite recently, and it has now completely superseded Suâkin as the principal port of the Sudan. The Arabs call Port Sudan "Shaykh Barûd," after a prominent shaykh who died there on his way to Mekka. His tomb, adorned with weird flags and surrounded by a short wooden fence, still stands prominently on a little sandy eminence at the entrance to the harbour. It contrasts very strangely with the immense iron girders of a modern electrical coaling apparatus, which towers up immediately behind it on the massive stone wharf.

The next day, May 25th, our steamer reached Massowa—the port of Eritrea. This town is situated on a small island connected with the mainland by a narrow causeway, half a mile long, which carries a road and railway. Massowa is a primitive collection of stone and mud houses, which have been built without any attempt at order. There are no metalled roads, and the streets are unlighted at night.

Having landed, I told the Arab who was carrying my saddle-bags that I was a hâjji and wished to sail for Arabia.

"Good! There are hâjjis here," he replied, as he continued to thread his way round the corners of houses.

Presently he entered a gateway leading into the courtyard of a house which appeared to be still in the hands of the builders. A heap of cement and some bricks and planks of wood encumbered the courtyard and the lower rooms. I followed the man up a winding stair and, arrived at the top, he deposited my saddle-bags in a room which was empty save for a large tin trunk and a basketful of cooking utensils and other

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household apparatus. The door of this room led on to a verandah on which, sitting on a spread carpet, were two Arabs wearing a form of the Mekkan dress.

I gave the porter his hire, and at once proceeded to join the Arabs.

"Peace be upon you," I said.

"And upon you be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings," they rejoined. "Do us the favour! Sit!"

I sat down on the carpet before them.

Both the Arabs were lean, large-eyed and light skinned—of a yellow hue. One of them, who was smoking a highly scented sickly smelling cigarette, appeared to be about forty-five or fifty years old, and from the likeness between them it was fairly evident that he was the father of the other. The old man was dressed in a thawb (gown) of lãss, a kind of artificial silk, pale yellow in colour; and his head was swathed in the folds of a bright white-and-yellow silken shawl. Over the thawb he wore a grey waistcoat and coat of European type. A massive gold watch-chain stretched from pocket to pocket of his waistcoat, and he took an early opportunity after my arrival to investigate the time—nonchalantly pulling out a great gold watch which had two faces, one for Arabic time—by which the day ends at sunset which is twelve o'clock—and one for European time. On each of his hands there were three or four jewelled rings. He was a quiet dignified man in manner, beginning to shrivel with approaching age. His teeth, though incomplete in number, were, taken *en bloc*, of considerable value—many of them being of gold. Having come to the end of his cigarette, Abdul Majîd, for that was his name, immediately lighted another. These cigarettes were longer than the average, and very thin. When I men-

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daciously praised their disgusting scent he told me, with an air of gentlemanly importance, that they came from Stambûl—he himself having but recently left the capital of the Othmânîs.

The son was merely an inferior copy of the father. The father being so expensive a work it was natural that the new publication should be a cheap edition. He wore no gold, neither did he smoke. His thawb was of white linen, and over it he wore a jubba or robe of yellow artificial silk, and on his head a turban of that material. The Muslim is forbidden to wear silk or gold. The lâss or artificial silk mentioned above is produced from the pith of a tree which grows principally in Java, and although its use has been sanctioned by the Muhammadan jurists, there are a number of the more puritanical Muslims who disapprove of its use on account of its close resemblance to the product of the Chinese worm.

“Is your purpose the House?” asked the old man, meaning the House of God—the Kaaba. Having sat down on the carpet, I took their right hands in turn.

“If God wills,” I replied.

“I am chartering a steamer to carry my goods to El Lîth,” he said through the scented smoke. “If you like you may travel in her.”

“When will she start?” I asked.

“If God wills—after two days or three,” he replied, “but the matter is upon God.”

“May He be praised and exalted,” said Hasan, the merchant’s son—in which exclamation I joined.

While I sat looking contemplatively out over the blue water of the bay to a great dark mountain which rises out of the sea to the southward, footsteps became audible of people ascending the stairs.

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The two Mekkans looked calmly towards the stair-head; and turning my head I saw the Moorish merchant, followed by his white-shrouded wife and the other three Moors, coming onto the verandah. Leading them were two dark young men, flashily dressed in European clothes and tarbûshes.

"God keep you alive," said Abdul Majîd.

"Peace be upon you," said the two young men, who then proceeded to shepherd the Moors into one of the empty rooms.

Presently, when the argument about payment of the porters had been concluded, the two effendis came and sat with us on the carpet. They shook hands all round.

"These are mutawwifs" (pilgrim guides), said Abdul Majîd. "They will arrange your matter in Mekka."

The young men shot me quick glances, appraising me and endeavouring to estimate my paying-power, and then looked down to the carpet without speaking. Good manners before the merchant, their senior in years and station, enjoined silence. Possibly, too, they thought it would be to their advantage to leave the initiative to me. I thought they might be useful to me, and determined to speak to them about the matter later.

One of these two was called Abdulla. His age was something between twenty-five and thirty years. Of medium height, with regular features, a large black moustache and clean-shaven chin, he was plainly as vain as an empty-headed girl. His eyes, though they often smiled, were never pleasing—their expression being always shallow and meaningless.

The other was called Jamîl. Also of middle height but darker than Abdulla, his cast of features plainly told that he was more than half Indian. The expression

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of his eyes was a cunning thoughtfulness, and he seldom smiled. His age may have been thirty or slightly more.

Later, as I sat on a rug in the room where my saddlebags had been placed, these two came in.

"Welcome, O Ahmad Effendi!" they said as they sat down. "We have seen the captain of a sanbûq" (dhow), proceeded Abdulla, "and he will carry us across to El Lîth."

"But," I said, "Abdul Majîd the merchant has chartered a steamer. We can better go in that."

"Steamer!" exclaimed Jamîl. "There is no steamer here which can travel. There are two launches whose machinery is too broken to work. Wallah! broken. It will take months to repair them."

This I afterwards found to be true. The Arab usually talks of his project as though it were *fait accompli*, just as the qualities of anything of which he approves are invariably of superlative degree.

I decided that, as I should probably experience some difficulty in engaging a suitable servant here at short notice, I would suggest to these two Mekkans that they should arrange all the details for my journey to Mekka in exchange for a sum of money.

After nearly an hour's stressful conference, in the course of which Abdulla and Jamîl expressed for each other and for me every emotion from murderous hate to fraternal love, it was finally decided that they should "carry" me from Massowa to Mekka for the sum of ten pounds. Four pounds was to be paid at Massowa; three pounds at El Lîth, a village on the Arabian shore four camel stages from Mekka; and the remaining three pounds in Mekka. They were to provision and mount me, and to house me at halting-places.

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The contract was written out on two pieces of paper, one of which the Mekkans signed, while I signed the other.

This was done in the presence of Hasan, the son of Abdul Majid. The papers having been exchanged, the contract was ratified in a fervid shaking of hands. I extracted from the pocket of a belt which was hidden under my clothes, reluctantly and one by one, four golden sovereigns. These I handled regretfully for a moment and then handed them over, one by one, to Jamîl—counting them distinctly as I did so.

Being Semites, they could understand and respect my apparent sorrow at being parted from my money. The fact that it was to themselves that I was parting with it doubtless made their sympathy only the more disinterested.

The transaction was then hallowed by Hasan's repeating the Fâtiha or opening chapter of the Korân, at the end of which everybody said "Amîn!" The words of the Fâtiha are:—

"In the Name of God, the Very Merciful, the Merciful. Praise to God, Lord of all creatures. The Compassionate, the Merciful. Ruler of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship, and of Thee we beg succour. Guide us in the right way—the way of those upon whom Thou hast conferred grace; of those with whom Thou art not angered; and of those who do not go astray."

"What is your nationality, O Hâjj Ahmad?" asked Abdulla kindly.

"My origin is from Damascus," I replied, "but I have lived long in Egypt."

II

AT MASSOWA

LIFE at Massowa was a lazy and comfortless existence. All day the flaming sunlight blazed down, bleaching the vivid colours of sea and mountains many shades paler than they were at morning and evening. Outside, the white dusty lanes lay silent in a heat so great that their whiteness might almost have been the manifestation of incandescence. Within the house even a tiled floor and thick walls could not greatly mitigate the panting oppression—so still and stagnant was the air.

Abdulla and Jamîl were not discontented. They were arranging the business of hiring berths in a dhow for ourselves and the Moors. For this purpose we would go, after the sunset prayer, to a succession of coffee houses. Sitting on a bench before some ramshackle hovel, we would sip what was apparently water which had been cooked too suddenly, and so had burned and turned black. In order to remedy the bitterness which this mode of cooking water engenders, some sugar had been added to it. While we sipped, with signs of intense satisfaction, Abdulla would inquire of neighbour bibbers as to that day's news of dhows arrived and those expected to sail.

Our two youths sold their European suits and their tarbûshes in the market-place, and resumed the turban and thawb, or gown, of Mekka. I donned somewhat similar dress.

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By day we would sit on our blankets on the tiled floor while Abdulla cooked food on a primus stove. Or we talked, prayed, ate, or walked in the shabby market-place. Here everything was of the poorest. The furniture of the shops was made of dismembered packing cases, and the curtains had once been sacks. Along the stifling crowded wharf, carts of merchandise were eternally being dragged and pushed by teams of coolies instead of horses.

“Yâ Nabînâ!” (O our Prophet!) sings the leader of the gang, and from the sweating team comes the refrain: “Sollaynâ!” (We have prayed.)

The natives of Massowa are rather short in stature, and very thin, but well formed. Their colour is a very dark brown, frequently approaching nearly to black, and most of them wear a tuft of black beard. They are by descent a mixture of the Arab with the Takrûni, the Galla, the Dankal, and other races of the African sea-board and Abyssinia. The current language is Arabic, which is well-spoken here—the dialect being closely akin to the Hijâzi.

As we sat in the covered verandah of our house, we could see, away on the far southern side of the bay, a great mass of barren rock, coloured with dark mellow shades of brown and purple. Lighter streaks were visible where the sun-lit chines of the northern spurs dropped down to the sea. In the foreground was the sea of aquamarine with vivid green patches over the shallows. Floating in the middle of this sea of green and blue was a little island, thickly wooded with green shrubs on its seaward side, and trailing off in a long streak of golden sand—like the tail of a comet. The scene was bedazzled with the incessant shimmering heat-blaze.

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My companions had heard that the Sharîf Ali had a gunboat watching the ports south of Jidda. All sorts of news was constantly in circulation, as every dhow coming from the Arabian side brought Mekkans who were fleeing from the straitness of war conditions and the uncomfortable puritanism of the Wahhâbîs. Apparently it was to be a case of "touch and go" getting into Arabia, with the possibility of being interned at Jidda as prisoners of war.

Whenever our mutawwifs spoke of their efforts to procure for us passages on a dhow, the Moorish merchant, Muhammad, becoming solicitous for the comfort of his wife, pressed them to wait a day or two in order to see if Abdul Majîd was successful in chartering a steamer in which we might travel.

Abdulla and Jamîl preferred a dhow, as they would make more profit out of the "squeeze," or brokerage, which it was their habit to put upon every transaction in which they had a hand.

"It is better to go in a steamer—a reliable thing," said the Moor. "Who knows when we shall reach El Lîth in a dhow? Perhaps we shall miss the Hajj."

Abdulla brought religion into the argument as usual, saying, "A sanbûq is as a steamer—all is one. Is not everything under the command of God?"

"All is under God's command," assented the Moor. "But why, O Abdulla! have you never travelled in a dhow before, if a dhow is as good as a steamer?"

"If you do not believe that all things are under the command of God, your faith is not complete to perform the Hajj," said Abdulla, getting ruffled.

"Never mind!" I said. "Perhaps the learned Abdulla will teach us all somewhat of religious matters in the way to Mekka."

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Abdulla composed his countenance to becoming gravity.

"If God wills," he said.

His opinion of himself was too exalted for him to suspect sarcasm. He was a good specimen of the average Mekkan mutawwif. Ignorant of his religion in all save its outward forms, and of all other learning, he had travelled over half Europe with nothing in the way of intellectual food save coffee-house gossip. He had no copy of the Korân, or of any other book, in his bag; and his talk was all of money and food—interspersed with obscene jests.

The two of them, Abdulla and Jamîl, frequently borrowed a small mirror which I had in my saddle-bag.

"Where is that little mirror of yours, Hâjj Ahmad," one of them would say. "It is a good mirror but a trifle small." Then they would pass and re-pass the mirror to each other and twirl their moustaches in it, turning their heads from side to side, with absorbed eyes ever on the glass. They seemed to be taking an affectionate farewell of their moustaches and making the most of them while they could, as it was known that the Wahhâbîs banned long moustaches, and they would be obliged to crop them small before they set foot in El Hijâz.

One morning a fierce quarrel broke out between these two worthies. It appeared that Jamîl had spread his blanket so that one extremity of it overlapped the blanket of Abdulla. Over this gross infringement of boundary rights they broke out into verbal warfare of the most vindictive description. For nearly an hour the battle raged, but the point at issue was apparently far too important for either side to relinquish his rights save with death. The air seemed still charged with

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venomous mutterings of the aftermath when Abdulla turned to me.

"Me and Jamîl have broken partnership," he said. "We cannot travel together. So our contract with you is also void."

"Silence!" I said. "And fear God!"

"Finished," he said again. "We cannot travel together."

"Then I will take the money which I gave you again," I said.

Abdulla did not answer, and presently he and Jamîl went separately outside the room. I heard the voice of Hasan, the son of the Mekkan merchant, Abdul Majîd, speaking to them, and soon afterwards they re-entered the room together. Abdulla's hand rested on Jamîl's shoulder. They were apparently faster friends than ever. Abdulla later confided to me that all the Mekkans are quick-tempered, but that "their hearts are good."

On the fourth night after my arrival at Massowa, as I lay on the roof between sleeping and waking, the mutawwifs came up to arrange their beds. Accompanying them was a native of Africa of the Dankal race, whom I found to be the captain of the dhow on which we subsequently embarked. The Moors were already lying on the roof.

"O Hâjj Muhammad!" said Abdulla. "We have found a sanbûq, and it sails to-morrow."

"Praise to God," exclaimed the Moor.

"We have paid the captain, here he is, two rîyâls for each one of us," proceeded Abdulla, "and we will now pay him two more. The hire is four rîyâls each."

Abdulla, Jamîl, and the black captain—his name was Husayn—sat down, and all the Moors sat up.

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Abdulla then handed to the skipper, with an air of great importance, two riyâls for each passenger—the four Moors and their woman, Jamîl, himself and me.

The Captain, saying “bismillah,” took each coin, and having unsuccessfully tried to bend it, rang it sharply on the floor, or rather the roof, in front of him.

“You have four riyâls for each—Not so?” said Abdulla.

“Yes,” replied the skipper, tying up the large silver coins in his waist-cloth.

Abdulla now made the Moors a telling speech in which he disclosed to those fortunate pilgrims the great fatigues he had nobly endured in their cause. His peroration, in which he told them of the incalculable services he would yet perform for love of them—“Wallah! without reward, only for love”—was delivered with passionate sincerity. So affected were the simple souls that they impulsively wriggled forward and, one by one, taking their hands, they kissed the mutawwifs on the mouth, being met by the Mekkans with a similar salutation—a disgusting spectacle. Hâjj Ahmad, the European, turned over; mixing, as he did so, with the heavy breathing of sleep a plentiful supply of the grunt of disgust. I had observed our two youths in the market-place, kissing friends whom they had not seen for some time. Their way of doing it was not merely to “peck,” but to indulge in a long-continued, noisy kind of osculation, and always on each other’s mouths.

After this bout, all lay down to sleep save Abdulla, who sat for long moments pensively gazing at the stars. At last he said, very earnestly—

“O my Lord! Thou knowest best as to my woman!” and then at once lay down and went to sleep.

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In that moment the good in Abdulla had come to the top. His wife and child were in Mekka.

I bought £50 of English gold in Massowa, and, in addition, I carried in my belt £150 in Egyptian bank notes.

At last, on the 30th of May, we rose before daylight from our uncomfortable couches on the roof, performed ablutions, prayed, collected our belongings, rounded up the half dozen chickens which Jamîl had purchased, and going down into the faint greyness of the cold silent street, we made our way between the scattered hovels to the waterside.

"We have not yet drunk coffee," said Jamîl regretfully as we walked.

I smiled. Sufficient for me was the fact that I was setting out for Arabia.

"Never mind," I said. "If God wills, we will drink later."

III

MASSOWA TO EL GAHM, IN THE YEMEN

ARRIVED at the wharf, our party descended into two small boats which were plying for hire, and gliding over the silent waters in the dim light, we came alongside a large dhow which was lying at anchor among a score of others in the roadstead.

Clambering aboard, I assisted in stowing our baggage on the poop, where I found four Abyssinians already installed. These four, who were Gallas, I found to be of a very gentle yielding temper. All day they spoke among themselves in murmurs, or haltingly read passages from several tattered Arabic devotional books. Everything they did was done gently. They slept, prayed, and starved, in an undertone, as it were. For food they had divers little sacks containing lumps of rock-like durra* bread. This they gnawed painstakingly, and they drank water. Apparently they found this diet too high, as they fasted every second day. Two of them were dressed in drawers and shirts of unbleached calico, with an extra length of the same material which could be worn as a cape, a muffler, or a blanket, at will. The other two already wore the ihrâm, or pilgrim garb, which will be described later.

Our dhow was some hundred feet in length, and in beam was perhaps twenty-five feet at its broadest part. It carried two short masts which leaned sharply forward. The great boom, or yard, of the fore-mast

* Millet.



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extended the whole length of the dhow, as it lay along the deck before being hoisted. The vessel was heavily laden with sacks of rice and of sugar, and the top of her gunwale was within a foot of the water. This disadvantage had been overcome by lashing pieces of rush matting to the posts along her sides. Thus fortified, the craft and her light-hearted crew were ready to cross the Red Sea.

Presently the captain came aboard. He was dressed, like his crew of nineteen slim brown youths, in nothing but a waist-cloth, which extended to his knees.

"Peace be upon you," said the captain, coming onto the poop.

"And upon you be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings," responded everybody.

"Hâmid is where?" asked the captain, eyeing his crew thoughtfully.

"Here," said a despondent voice, and looking over the side we saw a sad-faced youth, sitting in a hollowed tree-trunk boat, who had noiselessly paddled his way under the dhow's side. With him in the dug-out were two plump young goats. These were pulled aboard by the joking crew, Hâmid followed, and then the dug-out was dragged aboard.

The captain issued brisk orders, half in Arabic and half in his own African dialect. The great triangular sail was pulled out of its enormous sack and passed along the boom by the thin nimble hands of the chain of brown youths. The captain lent a hand, and soon the sail was securely tied to the yard. The crew went to the ropes, and slowly the long tapering boom rose to the creaking accompaniment of blocks and tackle.

"One, two," the captain sang, hauling on the ropes like the rest of them.

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"Three, four," responded the straining crew.

"Three, four," shouted the ribald Abdulla, drowning the captain's, "one, two."

"Three, four," cried the crew with a laugh.

Thus we set out, slowly gliding past the headland. The boom was secured—its lofty point being a hundred feet above our heads. The breeze was very light, and the great sail flapped fitfully to and fro. The captain, whom the passengers addressed as Amm Husayn (Uncle Husayn), his labours over, came aft and donned a clean suit; that is to say he shed his waist-cloth, which was his only garment, and put on a newer one. Then, with grins of delight, he pulled a small bundle out of the little wooden locker on the poop. This he unrolled—displaying the Italian flag.

"That cost me ten francs," said he, "you must pay half, O Abdulla!"

"You stole it," says Abdulla, ever ready for a duel of the tongue. "And what ship is this to carry hâjjis? I will have you imprisoned when we get to the Island of the Arabs. You stole the ship from the heirs of our Lord Noah."

The gentle-mannered captain smiled indulgently.

"If we meet the Sharîf Ali's gunboat," he explained to me, "we will fly the flag of the Tolyânîs, and they will not hinder us."

All this day and the next we proceeded very slowly in the stifling heat, there being scarcely any breeze. By day, Uncle Husayn rigged up an awning over the poop. It was composed of a piece of ancient ragged sail-cloth, and the shafts of sunfire which came through its many holes seemed to burn with greater venom than did the full force of the sun without the awning.

During the night of the second day a fine fresh wind

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from the north-west sent us forward at exhilarating speed, the dhow's bow rising and falling gaily as she forged her way through the choppy sea.

At daylight on the third day we found ourselves among a group of rocky and sandy islets—small and uninhabited. Two other dhows, crowded with Sudanese and other Africans, were sailing close to us. Seeing a wild-looking black figure stumbling about on one of the islets, I pointed him out to the captain. Uncle Husayn told me that he was a Sudanese who had long lived alone on that barren sun-scorched foothold in the disastrous desolation of the Red Sea. He lived on oysters, but none knew whence he procured water. His home was a rough wooden hut. Here he lived on his flat disc of yellow sand in the burning void, grilling like a steak in a frying-pan, and persistently refusing all offers of rescue.

The breeze freshened again soon after sunrise the next day, and we proceeded at a good pace until after sunset.

Abdulla spent his time between sleeping, cooking, and making senseless remarks. Jamîl did much the same, but was more silent. Their culinary creations were distinguished by simplicity. Boiled rice, with or without an admixture of lentils, was the invariable foundation. Upon this would be poured samn (melted butter), and salt and pepper would be added. Occasionally one of the unfortunate chickens, thinned for the table instead of being fattened, would be despatched with "bismillah" and a knife stroke. They were only fed about once a day when Abdulla lighted upon them in his search for the paraffin-oil can with which they were stowed away under the poop. The chicken, being boiled, was placed on top of the rice, and each

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of us broke off pieces until it was gone. We usually invited Uncle Husayn to join us—the mutawwifs and myself; but when he accepted twice in succession, the ill-bred Abdulla, in spite of my reprimands, made such persistent and rude remarks about his appetite and his manner of eating, that poor Husayn after that used to wait until we had finished and then clean up the dish by himself. The two goats were killed and eaten on the first and second days of the voyage, and supplied feasts for everyone aboard. For the rest our food consisted of fried eggs for breakfast, followed by a Turkish preparation of sugar known to the Arabs under the generic name “halâwa,” which is applied to all sweetstuff or sweet pastry. This was eaten with bread, which the heat of the atmosphere had baked into bricks. We drank tea with no milk and much sugar, and occasionally Uncle Husayn discovered a little money-bag which contained a small but apparently priceless hoard of coffee berries. One or two of these having been crushed and cast into hot water, Uncle Husayn would presently pour us out a few drops each of his treasured beverage, his hand ashake with the excitement of seeing the nectar flow, or with the fear that a drop might be spilt.

All day long the Abyssinians talked murmuringly among themselves, or read the Korân in an undertone. One of their number, called Shaykh Idrîs, was a man of some learning. He spoke classical Arabic well, although he had never lived among Arabs. He told me that he had taught himself from books during twenty-five years of study. He had cut himself off from marriage and from all worldly pleasure, and devoted his life solely to the pursuit of religious knowledge.

The Moorish woman lay behind a screen of white

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calico which her husband had so rigged up that it formed a small square chamber. When the dhow pitched she could be heard within her bower, groaning plaintively. At other times she would render a long religious chant in a tone expressing a mixture of despair and whooping cough. So distressing was her performance that, as she chanted, I found myself looking towards the bow of the vessel, eagerly wishing for the appearance of a wave which would make the dhow pitch sufficiently to shake the lady out of her chant. I found her groaning much more musical.

One of the Moors occasionally chanted the Korân, but his pronunciation was so bad that one could scarcely understand a single word of it. Abdulla and Jamîl sat together convulsed with half-suppressed laughter, and making ribald criticisms of the chanter.

"O Hâjj Ahmad!" whispered Jamîl to me, spluttering with mirth. "Hear the singer! Is he not fine? Wallah! All my life I have not heard such a one as he."

"What casîda (chant) does he sing?" I asked the first time, being ignorant that it was from the Korân.

This made our two youths explode with laughter.

The Moor, his name was Hâjj Mowlûd, continued to bellow and bray. Poor soul, he meant well, but he ought to have had a dhow to himself. When he was silent, the grinning Abdulla would sometimes shout in his brazen voice, while only partially restraining his glee:

"O Hâjj Mowlûd! How is your state? Will you not give us somewhat from the Korân?"

The flattered Moor, with grave looks to the horizon and the mast-head, would rise from his recumbent position on the rice sacks, and seating himself decorously, commence to bray and howl.

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The other Moors were quiet, inarticulate creatures, but well able to take care of themselves, as all the Moors are. The merchant was illiterate, but nevertheless he had long religious chants of some dervish order in his head. One day he let some of these out during three hours of subdued warbling. His performance was more supportable than that of his wife and his companion, but I did not regret that he did it only once.

The speech of the Moors is much debased from the Arabic of Arabia, and the use which they make of accentuation is peculiar. Even our Mekkans, with their experience of all the races who go to Mekka in the Hajj, frequently failed to understand what the Moors said.

The crew were cheerful souls. Their life was a hard comfortless one. After the two goats had been killed, they lived on nothing but stone-like masses of durra bread for nearly a week. They drank only water, which was carried in a great iron drum amidships. At night they threw themselves down on the bare deck to sleep, or on top of the cargo, with only a piece of old sacking for covering.

At sunset the captain would open his little wooden locker with a key, and taking out a cheap and ancient watch, would wind it up—setting it to twelve o'clock Arabic time. He would also take out a small battered pocket-compass, and moving it round a little, would say, "Look, Hâjj Ahmad! that is the north, and here the south," or some such remark, with a knowing air.

"Then where is the Kibla?" I asked him once.

Uncle Husayn took a quick look at the wakening stars, disregarding the compass.

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"There is the Kibla," he replied without hesitation, pointing across the port bow.

He slept a little during the daytime, but at night he did not sleep at all. He would sit on the poop with the rudder-arm under his own arm, and at long intervals would chant a supplication to God for a good breeze. Occasionally he sang softly in his African language, and his voice was not unmusical. One day he borrowed my nail-scissors for the purpose of cutting his hair. Each little astrakan curl was held between the finger and thumb of his left hand, while his right manipulated the scissors. When he had finished, his head presented the appearance of a muddy football which had been rolled in coal-dust.

One day Abdulla was disputing, as was his wont, with Uncle Husayn, and being worsted in the argument he said: "Why do you contradict me, O black one? You are of the slave race. I will take you up to Mekka and sell you in the slave market."

Husayn did not cease to smile easily at this insult, only his eyes became brighter.

"No!" he said. "I am of the Dankal race. There are no slaves among us. Wallah! we get the slaves for the slave markets of Arabia. We are no slaves! Never! Never!"

It sounded uncommonly like the refrain of "Rule Britannia!" but I think my involuntary smile was taken by Uncle Husayn as one of encouragement to himself.

I was interested in his naive confession, and later on I asked Husayn about the slave traffic. He told me that the captains of dhows occasionally buy a slave or two on the African coast and take them across, as members of the crew, to Arabia, where they sell them again.

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"But," he concluded, "it is not done much now for fear of the warships of Europe."

Others are brought across the Red Sea as servants or companions to the merchants, their owners.

On the afternoon of our fifth day out from Massowa the wind increased to considerable violence, and the sea rose. Presently the waves, beating against the rush matting of the dhow's side, stove it in at one point. Uncle Husayn called brisk words of command, and the crew began to bale water out of the space which had been left amidships between the cargo and the raised poop. All the while the wind was increasing in violence, and the overloaded dhow, rolling in the heavy seas, was constantly shipping water over her sides which, as already mentioned, extended, leaving out of account the frail rush matting, only a foot above the water-line. Some of the crew were still mending the broken matting, when suddenly without any warning, the long yard of the after mast broke in two and came crashing down upon us. Fortunately, it slithered over the side without striking anybody, dragging its sail with it. It also broke and took with it a wooden stanchion to which was secured a small canvas bag belonging to me. I had that morning taken this little sack out of my saddle-bag, and had secured it for the time being to the stanchion. I never saw it again. It contained my English passport and an Oriental passport, and also a small compass and an aneroid. Thus it was that I completed my travels without any passport whatsoever. My camera was saved because I happened to have it in the pocket of my thawb. I was carrying it with me because I wanted to secure a photograph of Uncle Husayn, but in this I was unsuccessful.

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Uncle Husayn and some of his crew quickly cut the ropes of the fallen tackle, but nothing was abandoned. The sail was slowly drawn inboard, and also the two pieces of the broken spar.

The Abyssinian, Shaykh Idrîs, and also the Moorish woman, were made very sick by the rolling and pitching of the dhow. The only cure they attempted was complete starvation and punctuality at prayers.

Towards evening on this, the fifth day of our voyage, in the middle of the hubbub of creaking tackle and yelling voices, of discomfort and dirt, I looked back over the stern of the dhow, and there in the distance I saw a great ocean steamer racing down to Aden. For a moment I thought with longing of the cool placidity of her spotless decks; and with even more longing of those wonderful little ivory buttons on the bulkheads, which have only to be pressed with the finger to ensure the presence of an obliging Aladdin who will bring you the most delicious of iced drinks. But only for a moment I may truly say, for in the next I had turned again to search with eager gaze the eastward haze behind which lay Arabia.

Thus the days passed slowly away until, on the afternoon of our eighth day out from Massowa, as we lay upon the deck in somnolent languor under the blazing sun, Uncle Husayn suddenly stiffened as he sat at the rudder, and looking keenly ahead, said "There is land!"

Instantly everybody on the poop sat up and looked with straining eyes in the direction he indicated. Looking fixedly ahead, I could just make out the faint outline of a group of mountain peaks. Nearer was a small rock island which rose, grim and black, sheer out of the water to a height of perhaps seven hundred feet.

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It is called Catanbal. As we drew nearer to the coast the rugged peaks of rock became ever clearer. Like great jagged teeth they were, but black and strangely grim. Arabia! There it lay, across the sparkling expanse of blue waters. The country which, surrounded by great civilisations with their splendour and wealth, has itself remained an unknown wilderness. A country whose actual inhabitants number no more than five million souls, but which is looked upon as their spiritual homeland on earth by three hundred millions of the human race.

The hâjjis were all sitting up now.

"Praise to God," they fervently cried.

"O God! Thou art the Merciful. Thou Lord of the worlds."

"God is Greatest. There is no God but The God alone."

"There is no Succourer but Thee! Thou Most Merciful of those who show mercy."

Some of them even cried "Labbayk, Allahumma, Labbayk" ("Here am I, O God! At Thy command").

The terrors of the sea were forgotten. The burning sun no longer oppressed them. The Moorish woman insisted that her white screen should be raised, and sat, with uncovered face and emotional eyes, tremulously praising God.

"Is there a town on the coast here?" I asked the captain.

"Yes," he replied. "Birk is above us, and this is El Gahm."

"Then we are far from El Lîth," I said.

"We will pass by here and go up the coast to El Lîth," he replied. "But if you like to land here and hire camels you can go up by land to Mekka."

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I recommended to Jamîl and Abdulla that we should do this, and the matter was agreed upon and cancelled, and again agreed upon, some half a dozen times during the afternoon. The Moorish merchant, who at Massowa had proved difficult to induce to travel in the dhow, did not now want to leave it. Abdulla and Jamîl did not want to lose the Moors, or, more correctly, the Moors' money. Thus, whenever the Moors wavered, Abdulla and Jamîl found themselves on shifting ground and were obliged to jump with them.

Towards sunset the dhow sailed over a reef of white rock some twenty miles from the coast. The water was very clear and, looking over the stern, I saw that we were followed by an escort of three large sharks, which glided over the white reef beneath us like gigantic carp in a marble tank. Sometimes they turned on their sides to look up at the dhow, and then the under-hung lines of their grim mouths were visible, and the whiteness of their bellies. Inside the reef, which is very narrow, the water is again deep.

The wind now increased and blew so strongly from the north that Uncle Husayn decided to run into the cove of El Gahm and anchor for the night. It was after sunset when we found ourselves beneath a towering conical mountain of black rock which forms the headland on the northern side of the little bay. Within this bay dhows anchor at about a mile from the shore. The water is apparently very shallow all over the bay, but small steamers could anchor within two miles of the shore and still be within the shelter of the headlands. Uncle Husayn told me that the only safe approach is well to the southward of the northern headland. He sailed his dhow in at a point some ten miles south of

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that landmark. A small whitened mosque, standing amid dark groves of palm trees, on the curving shore to the south-eastward of the mountain, was faintly visible in the falling dusk.

As soon as the anchor had been thrown overboard and its rope secured, one of the dug-outs was pushed over the side for Shaykh Idrîs to go ashore and recuperate. He was accompanied by two others of the Abyssinians. They had not paddled more than a quarter of a mile in the moonlight, when the boat bumped on the shallow bed of the bay. They got out and waded to dry land. They had intended to spend the night ashore, but being unable to find any wood for making a fire, and repelled by the rock-strewn inhospitable nature of the ground, and by the cries of jackals, they returned after a little while, and clambering aboard, re-settled themselves on the poop with signs of relief and appreciation.

Night advancing, we despatched the evening meal and performed the 'eshâ prayer, and then lay down to sleep. The dhow lay motionless. Here, beneath the sheltering black mountain, the wind moved gently on its southward way. The great white moon of the fourteenth night (of Du-l Giada) hung, calm and motionless, above the mast-heads, among the stars, transforming the blue-blackness of the silent world to ghostly clearness.

IV

EL GAHM

LONG before sunrise the next day (7th June) we were aroused by the sounds of the crew heaving up the anchor and raising the sail. Having performed our ablutions, dipping sea-water from over the dhow's side for the purpose, as our custom was, in order to spare the fresh water, we prayed the dawn prayer and then breakfasted.

Uncle Husayn now endeavoured to sail the dhow out of the bay. Three times he circled towards the open sea, but each time he found the wind from the north-west too strong to beat up against. Finally he brought the vessel back to her original anchorage, and dropped anchor.

All the morning the debate was carried on between Abdulla, Jamîl, and the Moors, as to whether we should remain aboard or pursue our journey by land. At last, when the Moors had consented for perhaps the tenth time to go by land, I said to Uncle Husayn "It is finished then. Launch the boats O Uncle Husayn! and let some of the youths help us with the baggage."

"Good," said the captain.

"It is not your business, O Hâjj Ahmad," said Abdulla. "These Moors must not be deserted. It is not possible for them to reach Mekka alone. Do they know the way?"

"They are coming with us," I replied. "Not so, O Hâjj Muhammad?"

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"We will go, if it please God," said the Moor, rising.

One of the boats was now floating alongside, and I dragged my saddle-bags to the waist of the dhow, where they were received by one of the sailors, who deposited them in the boat. Jamîl and Abdulla put their boxes into the boat, together with some of the Moors' belongings. Finally Jamîl and one of the sailors descended into the loaded boat and paddled towards the shore. Two more boats were then launched, and making several journeys between the dhow and the shore, eventually put us all on dry land. There were twelve of us in all—the four Moors, and their woman, four Abyssinians, the two Mekkans, and myself.

The village of El Gahm stands on a low, sandy plain which extends from the foot of the mountains of 'Asîr to the sea-shore. At this point the breadth of the plain, from the sea to the first of the foothills, is no more than two miles. Proceeding northward, the mountains gradually recede from the sea-shore, until, culminating in the heights of Jebel Kura between Mekka and Et-Tâif, they leave the broad plain of the western Tîhâma between themselves and the sea. El Gahm, with the exception of its stone mosque, is entirely built of thatch huts, called in the singular 'usha (plural 'ushash). Most of these huts were of circular beehive shape, but some few were square. A narrow plantation of date palms extended behind the village; and as far southward as one could see, scanty groups of these trees were growing along the sea-shore.

As the boat grounded in the shallows, I got out and waded a hundred yards or more to the shelving beach. Here, within a square hut which was open on three of its sides, Jamîl was sitting with one of the natives

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of the place. I entered, and saluting them with peace, seated myself on a bench or bedstead (here called kursî, sometimes sirîr) made of a wooden frame strung with plaited fibre cord. A few moments later Abdulla and the Moors entered, accompanied by several of the Gahm Arabs. The latter were little, thin, starved-looking men with great eyes and prominent noses. The colour of their skins was a very dark copper-brown, and their hair, which reached nearly to the shoulders, stood out in a fuzzy mass around the head, like a wig. Their thin faces, cunning restless eyes, and long matted hair, gave them the appearance of perfect elves. They wore nothing but a dirty thawb or smock, which reached a little below the knees. This was in some cases of a dirty white, but more generally it had been roughly dyed to a crude brown colour. Over this smock a belt was worn—either a single strip of leather, or several thin strips plaited together, or merely a piece of ancient calico become rope-like with use. Stuck into the belts of most of them was a short curved sword worn in a horizontal position. Some of them also had spears between six and seven feet in length. Their speech was singularly free from foreign words and expressions, and was, in point of purity of pronunciation and grammatical correctness, superior to that of the Bedouins of the tribe of Curaysh, who, working in the pilgrim traffic on the Jidda road, make use of many foreign words and expressions in their ordinary speech.

Presently one of the Bedouins, a sturdy youth named Zayd, brought us coffee. The Yemen manner of making coffee is to add a great deal of ground ginger (zanjabîl) to the brew. The taste of coffee is only faintly apparent, but the mixture makes a sufficiently pleasant drink. It

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is boiled in a long-necked clay bottle, and drunk out of large clay finjâns, which almost exactly resemble the tapping-cups which are used in the East Indies to collect latex from the india-rubber tree.

The coffee-drinking coming to an end, Abdulla and Jamîl began to treat with the Bedouins for camels to carry us to El Lîth. The Arabs, however, would not consent to take us beyond Birk, where we should be obliged to hire other camels in order to proceed on our way. Birk is little more than half a day's journey north of El Gahm. Presently Abdulla and Jamîl took the camel-owners outside, in order to complete the bargaining in private without being overheard by the Moors. Returning after a few minutes, they told us that they had arranged for us to start at daylight next morning for Birk.

It was now well past midday, and we proceeded to prepare food and to make ourselves as comfortable as possible on the sandy beach for the coming night. Uncle Husayn had come ashore with two of his crew, and it was pleasant to hear still his calm human speech occasionally dominating the boisterous inanity of Abdulla. As night fell, each, having eaten and prayed, wrapped himself in his blanket or cloak, and with nothing else between himself and the stars, went to sleep.

At dawn the next morning the Arabs brought a string of mangy camels into the village, and their ruckling and groaning awoke us from slumber. Prayers and coffee were hastily despatched, and then everybody prepared his baggage for loading on the camels. Uncle Husayn came to take leave of us, and then he and his two companions got into their dug-out and paddled away to the dhow.

The camels were loaded and we were all ready to

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mount when Abdulla, who had been furtively conferring with Jamîl, came towards me.

"Ahmad Effendi!" he said. "We did not understand the cost of carrying you to Mekka. We find you have not given us enough money. We want you to give us another two guineas."

I knew that this was merely an invention of the mutawwifs, and I also knew that if I did not nip their game in the bud, there would probably be no end to their demands in the future.

"Good." I replied to Abdulla. "But you cannot know, until we reach Mekka, what it will cost us. When we arrive there it will be time to discuss that matter. We will speak of it in Mekka, in shâ Allah."

"In any case, we want two guineas now, at once," he said, "as our money is finished."

The Bedouins and Moors stood watching us in motionless interest.

"The arrangement is that I give you more money at El Lîth," I said, "so it is upon you to wait until we get there."

At this the light-witted creature became enraged.

"He will not give!" he shouted. "If he does not give I will take it from him by force—the dog!"

Saying this, he pushed my shoulder slightly with his hand. Instantly every muscle in my body braced hard. There is something quite insupportable to an Englishman in the touch of hostile hands. Abdulla must have seen in my eyes a gleam of the anger which flooded every part of me, though I spoke only the one word "Hâsib!"—Take care!—for he fell back a pace or two looking at me, and then looking away again in a somewhat confused manner. Then, in a moment, he had recovered his brazen self-assertiveness.

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"I will take it by force from the dog," he shrieked, "it is my hope to take his life. The dog! the Jew! the Nasrâni!"

On the sound of the last dire word I felt every sharp pair of Bedouin eyes among them turn instantly upon me, as though actuated by a single mechanism; to scrutinise me intently for a moment and then continue their shifting observation of the scene in general. Their heads scarcely turned—only the eyes.

I unostentatiously raised my right hand to the pocket of my thawb, and thrusting it inside, I felt with my thumb the friendly hardness of a little revolver which I carried concealed at my waist, but I did not speak. I am afraid that had Abdulla dared definitely to strike me, I would have smashed his arm with leaden bullets.

The best way to nullify the grievances of these light-headed creatures, if overbearing force is ruled out, is to talk as loudly and as fast as themselves and let them think you are taking an interest in it, and perhaps to end up with a laugh and a half-promise. Members of a community which knows nothing of reserve, they cannot understand that quietness and calm impassivity may conceal strong purpose. At this moment, however, I could not have gone against my feelings and stooped to argue with the wretch to save my life. I had been so long cooped up with him in the dhow that I was quite weary of his ceaseless idiocy.

The word "dog" was nothing. These Bedouins could not but know that the lower classes of Mekkans "dog" and "pig" each other all day long. The word "Jew" also would not make much impression on their imagination. There are in El Yemen thousands of Jews, particularly in the capital, Sanaa, and in the south.

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The "accusation" of Nasrâni—Christian—was quite another matter. The Christian is more hated throughout the Islamic world at the present time than is Iblîs himself. The reason for this is doubtless that the world is, in the present age, almost entirely ruled by Christian powers—to the exclusion of the Muslimîn. Yet in the Korân, chapter *The Table*, it is written:

"Verily [O Muhammad!] thou wilt find the nearest among them [i.e. among mankind] in friendliness to the believers to be those who say 'Verily we are Christians.'"

If, therefore, the Muslimîn paid more attention to their sacred book, they should harbour a greater liking for the followers of the Christian form of religion than for the followers of any other save their own.

I do not suppose that Abdulla's calling me Nasrâni carried any conviction among his hearers, but such an "accusation" was bound to startle them at the moment of its utterance. There is only one person in a better position to arouse the fanatical hate of Muhammadans than a Christian in the way to Mekka, and that is a Christian who has already arrived in that forbidden city. But these had seen me pray, and the lightness of my skin was nothing to them. The complexion of Muhammad, the Moorish merchant, was, as it happened, considerably fairer than my own. The Bedouins probably thought I was a Turk, with which race the people of El Yemen had become quite familiar during several centuries preceding the Great War.

"Will you give the two guineas, O dog!" said again this "Neighbour of God," as the Mekkans are proud to call themselves.

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The Moors and Bedouins continued to regard us silently. The Moorish woman looked on fixedly, with the light of that strange lust beginning to appear in her eyes which I believe most women of Arab race feel when they watch a fight between men.

A brief glance over my shoulder was sufficient to inform me that Uncle Husayn, with his sail full, was three miles off shore. In the event of a fight there was no escape in that direction. Most settled Arabs, and even many of the Bedouins, can be fairly counted on to throw in their lot with the stronger side—regardless of right or of the claims of hospitality—especially if that course strikes them as leading lootward. The Abyssinians were too gentle and weak to do much—even for one of their own race. I was alone—but I had five rounds of ammunition in my revolver and another twenty in a cartridge-belt.

During these happenings I did not lose sight of my objective. My objective was Mekka; other matters were of no great importance. I saw, however, that the time had come for me to part company with the two mutawwifs; that was imperative.

I turned to the nearest of the Bedouins.

"Tell me," I said, "where is the house of the shaykh of the village, O my brother?"

"That is his house—there," he replied, pointing up the irregular row of thatch huts.

"We will go and speak to him," I said, moving forward a few paces. But the Bedouins demurred.

"It is a shame to do that," they said, "let the difference be settled among us."

"Good!" I replied, "who is the chief among you?"

One of them—a grey-bearded shaykh—commenced to question Jamîl about the arrangement made be-

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tween us. I walked away a few paces and sat down on a kursî, in order to let them argue the matter out. Presently the Bedouin shaykh came towards me.

"There is nothing against you, O my son!" he said: "but give him the two guineas and let him tighten (i.e. tighten the saddle ropes and travel). That is the best, and look upon the matter as an alms."

This, however, I refused to do, and he returned to the mutawwifs.

Presently, coming again, he sat down beside me.

"Give them a guinea, O my father!" he said. "Only one. Billah! give them a guinea. It is possible that we go to the shaykh of the village, but it is better to mend the matter with amity between you."

With the necessary show of reluctance, I extracted a sovereign from my belt and handed it to him.

"Take! O my father!" I said, "God make it easy for them."

He grinned.

"God requite you good," he said as he went away.

As soon as this transaction was completed, the two Mekkans, together with the Moors and their woman and the Abyssinians, all prepared themselves to mount. Just as they were ready Jamîl came towards me.

"Why not come with us, Hâjj Ahmad?" he said. "Do not pay any attention to Abdulla. He is mad, Wallah! I say mad. When we reach Mekka I will spread your carpet in the best room of my house, and you can sleep on the roof and do what you like. Our house is your house. By God! I love you, Hâjj Ahmad."

"I am sated with Abdulla," I replied. "From now on I will travel alone, in shâ Allah."

"Be it as you wish," he replied. "But give me the written paper which we signed, and I will return you yours."

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It might be they feared that I should accuse them before the Câdî (judge) at Mekka, and produce the written contract as evidence.

I refused to surrender the paper, and was glad I had done so when I observed that Jamîl's manner became still more ingratiating as a result of my refusal.

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said he, finally, "I tell you one thing. Do not leave this village without a water-skin of your own. Do not rely on the Bedu to supply you with water in the way."

They were now all ready to move off. Shaykh Idrîs, with the other Abyssinians, came across to take leave of me; and with them came one of the Moors for whom I had performed an insignificant service on the dhow.

"Come with us, Hâjj Ahmad," urged Shaykh Idrîs, "these youths (his companions) will serve you in the way."

"God bless you and them," I replied, "but I will rest here till to-morrow, and if it please God, I will see you again in the Haram of Mekka."

"If it please God," they said.

They each took my hand, in turn, the poor Abyssinian youths attempting to kiss it, and turned away to mount their camels.

The mutawwifs had, for their own greater profit, hired only sufficient camels for carrying two riders on each. Consequently the unfortunate hâjjis were obliged to sit in cramped positions which they could not easily change from time to time.

The string of ill-conditioned beasts moved slowly through the straggling huts and sparse clumps of date palms, out into the glaring sun-scorched coastal plain—northwards.

V

EL GAHM TO BIRK

I SPENT that day in the hut by the sea-shore, Zayd bringing me food. Occasionally some of the villagers would come in to salute me and enquire about my plans. From these I learnt that I was already in a country at war. El Gahm is within the borders of the Amîrate of 'Asîr, which is ruled by the Sayyid El Idrîsi. The powerful Imâm Yahya, ruler of the Yemen was at that time engaged in the kingly occupation—the desire for which seems to be universal—of extending his territories. It was easy for him to prove that the province of 'Asîr had once been ruled by the Imâms of Sanaa, and that being so, it was plainly his property. Accordingly the Imâm Yahya, as I now heard, would proceed to occupy the ground on which I stood so soon as a temporary truce which had been agreed upon between himself and the Idrîsi had expired.

Nobody in El Gahm appeared to suffer any travail of spirit over this depressing prospect. In fact some of the local youths had gone over to the Yemen side in order to enlist in the ranks of the invaders of their country. Others, being simpler souls, or perhaps having less knowledge of the political stock-exchange, had joined the motley band whose object it was to do or die in defence of 'Asîr and the Idrîsi Amîr. Apparently, however, the great majority of the inhabitants of the state had wisely decided to continue their proper avocations as though nothing untoward had happened or was likely to happen.

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Now and then a woman would come towards the hut, and standing a pace or two without, would look in upon us and listen to the conversation. Thin, starved under-sized, dirty, with great dark eyes filled only with a dreary cunning—I have never seen less attractive members of their sex. They were dressed like the men, in nothing but a filthy thawb or smock, dyed, in their case, with indigo. Their tousled hair was plaited in two ragged tails. They were as completely devoid of judgment as they were of charm—their faces were quite unveiled.

At the hours of prayer I repaired with Zayd to the mosque, and our way lay through the sùk. The latter consisted of three or four open huts, and contained nothing but dates, Yemen tobacco, green coffee berries and dukhn (a wheat-like grain, but very minute—resembling canary seed).

I slept the night on a kursî within the hut, in order to escape the bloodthirsty onslaught of the camel-ticks with which the sand was infested.

The next morning soon after sunrise, Zayd, coming from the market-place, told me that he had bespoken a camel to carry me to Birk.

Soon afterwards two Arabs appeared, leading a string of five camels loaded with sacks of dukhn. These halted at a little distance from the hut.

“O hâjji. Mount!” called one of the Arabs. “Where is Zayd?”

Zayd, hearing his name, came out of his hut, and lifting my saddle-bags he carried them to the camels. The bags having been thrown over the saddle of one of the animals, I shook Zayd by the hand and mounted. The next moment the camels were shuffling slowly through the dust of the palm groves. In a few minutes

more we left these behind, and came out on a plain of yellow sand hardened by water which had evaporated, leaving a crystalline residue of salt. This plain became gradually wider as we advanced, until, at four hours' distance from El Gahm, the distance between the sea-shore and the foot-hills was some five miles. Here we halted at a place called Duhbân, where we found a small stream of water flowing in the wâdi.

The Arabs halted here only long enough for us to drink from the stream, and then continued to press forward. Seated aloft on my camel I made a meal of dates and bread, handing some also to my companions who walked beside their animals.

After passing Duhbân, the ground surface changes from smooth sand to a slightly undulating plain thickly strewn with black rocks and pebbles of all shapes and sizes. This continues to the village of Birk, where our journey ended.

Birk stands on a rising ground at the midway point of the arc described by a little bay. The village is built of rush huts, with the exception of the house of the governor (at that time one Ali ibn Abdu), together with some store-houses and the mosque, which are constructed of stone.

The camels paced slowly up a steep little path bordered by low walls of stones—piled up or thrown together rather than built. These walls enclosed several small squares of ground, though why it was enclosed was not apparent. Inside the walls, as without, the only yield of the earth was stones. At the bottom of the eminence on which the village stood were four or five lonely-looking date palms, standing in the blazing sunlight at a stone's throw from the sea. So clear was

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the dry hot air, and so exhausting to breathe, that we might have been within the lifeless confines of a vast vacuum. The blinding sunlight drew from the camel-grass, the scrub, and the rocks of the further hillsides, delicate shades of pink, of purple, and of green, which no rocks or plants ever possessed in a lesser radiance of light. The air about us seemed itself to emit refulgent light, as though the fiery sun had heated it to a state of incandescence.

"You are alighting where, O hâjji?" asked one of the camel-drivers. He and his companion had both betrayed signs of uneasiness ever since we came in sight of the village. It was evident now that they were anxious to drop their loads and return.

"I will alight at the mosque," I replied.

"Good," he rejoined shortly.

As we threaded our way between the rush huts, we passed a portly man of middle age ambling down the narrow path.

"Es-salâm 'alaykum," he said.

We returned his salutation, and then he turned to walk beside one of my companions who was walking in the rear of the train of camels.

"Who is this?" I heard him ask.

"This one is a hâjji," replied the camel-driver.

"He alights where?" asked the other.

"His intention is the mosque—thus he says," he replied.

"Let him alight with me," he said, and coming alongside the camel on which I rode, he greeted me with "Welcome, O hâjji! How is thy state? Come and alight with us! Our house is near."

"Good," I replied. "I will alight with you."

In a few moments more we reached a rush fence,

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inclosing an irregular oval of ground some twenty yards long. Within this compound stood two huts.

At the invitation of the fat man, whose name was Muhammad, I dismounted and passed through the gateway of his dwelling. He himself took my saddlebags from the camel-driver and bore them in after me. With a brief farewell to us, the Arabs urged their camels forward again and disappeared round a bend of the dusty track on their way to the market-place, where they would unload their grain.

"Welcome, O hâjji!" said Muhammad, leading the way into the first of the two huts.

Following him in, I found myself in a circular room, measuring between fifteen and twenty feet in diameter, the roof of which was dome-shaped. This hut was constructed of three sorts of material. The first was a strong framework of stout poles—being the branches and stems of small trees. Over this was a close trellis-work of the sticks of palm-fronds. This was all secured or laced together by cords of twisted fibre, and over it was laid, and secured by cords, a thick thatch of rushes. These rushes are similar to the stalks of the durra plant, and are cultivated for this purpose on the Tihâma or seaboard plain of Western Arabia—particularly about El Gunfuda, and to the southward.

Within the hut were three kursîs, and two enormous wooden chests bound with bands of iron and studded with brass nails. Pegs or sticks of wood were stuck into the walls on every side, and upon these hung articles of clothing, among which were three tarbûshes made of plaited stalks. Also hanging to the walls were a number of little baskets containing various utensils, such as old knives, coffee finjâns, clay coffee-pots and the like. Over the wooden chests hung an ancient

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curved sword and a matchlock gun. There were two doorways to the hut, and on a flat stone near one of them stood two porous clay water-bottles called shirba (pl. shirab). The floor was of beaten earth.

As we entered, a thin pale-faced young woman rose from one of the kursîs, and giving me one dark sad look, glided bare-footed and shrouded out of the opposite doorway, like the incarnation of a half-revealed secret.

"Welcome!" said the hospitable Muhammad again. "Sit! We will make you coffee. Drink first of cold water."

I took the water-bottle from his hand, and saying "bismillah," was about to drink deeply of the cool water when he said "Wait! which water would you like? Taste of this and of this."

Saying so, he indicated the shirba in my hand, and also the other which remained on the stone. Then, taking a small wooden bowl from a peg, he poured a little water into it. I tasted and found it was brackish and alkaline.

"This," I said, "is saltish."

"Wait! I will give you other," he said, and having drunk the residue of the water from the bowl, he poured out a little from the second shirba and handed it to me. This was quite sweet.

"This," I said, "is much better. I will drink of this."

He smiled with the lazy appreciation of a connoisseur of rare vintages, and poured out the water for me to drink.

"This is from a spring," he said, "and that is from a well behind the house. This costs us a piastre for two girbas, and that costs only half a piastre!"

Presently, as we sat talking of the Wahhâbî invasion

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of the Hijâz, an old woman came to the door of the hut and placed a coffee vessel on the floor within. Muhammad rose, and arranged eight finjâns on a little wooden stool. He then filled them all with the contents of the coffee-pot—it was the same hot brew of ginger flavoured with coffee which I had drunk at El Gahm. Handing me a finjân, he took one himself, and having emptied these, we each took another of the full ones, and so on, till all the finjâns were empty.

It was now approaching sunset, and having performed our ablutions in the compound, we made our way to the mosque. This was a small walled square, without any roof or minaret. It was like a square courtyard, and was floored with slabs of stone. In one corner was a roughly-constructed stone tank containing water for wudhû (ceremonial ablution). In the northern wall was the mihrâb—the niche which indicates the direction of the Kibla.

Muhammad was the regular muaddin of the village, and accordingly, upon arrival at the mosque he mounted to the top of four or five stone steps in one corner of the building, and chanted the adân—the call to prayer. Among the ill-kempt throng who now came in at the little doorway, I noticed a tall fair man, wearing a white linen jacket over his thawb of the same material. He had yellow hair and moustache, and was the cleanest-looking person I had seen since landing in Arabia. He wore a Mekkan turban, and I guessed that he was from that city. Upon the conclusion of prayers, as I sat on the flagged floor talking to Muhammad, this man came up, and saluting us with peace, sat down with us. I learnt that he was a Serb, and that his father was settled in Mekka. He was known as Umar Effendi, and he held the position of Customs Officer

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for the Port of Birk. He invited me to join him for the evening meal; but to this my host, Muhammad, strongly objected. After much friendly quarrelling between them, however, it was agreed that as I was to sleep at the house of Muhammad and also to breakfast there in the morning, it was only equitable that Umar should have my company for that evening.

The people of Birk are, in fact, extremely agreeable and hospitable, and they have this reputation in Mekka and elsewhere. A small trader of Mekka, who had travelled far in the desolate marches of Arabia to buy and sell, once said to me: "Wallah! No people delight me as do the people of Birk." They are much more handsome than the Arabs whom I had seen further south, and their manners and speech are more refined than those of any other Arab community which I have encountered. The women were unveiled, though most of them occasionally made a feint of covering their faces in the presence of men, and some of them were of distinctly pleasing appearance. They were dressed in long dark-blue gowns which nearly covered their feet, and about their shoulders was a large piece of black cloth, somewhat resembling the malaya or habara of Egypt, but less voluminous. It was sometimes worn so as to cover the head, but was more generally allowed to fall to the shoulders. All went bare-footed.

In Umar's house I found another guest—one Hilmi, a Turk, who had once been a sergeant in the Turkish army stationed in the Yemen. For some reason which I did not learn, he had deserted, and for several years had been engaged in the lean business of buying and selling, or bartering, among the Bedouins. I asked him why he did not go back to Turkey, and he replied that he feared to do that lest he should be caught and shot

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE publishers wish to express their acknowledgments to His Excellency General Ibrahim Pasha Rifaat for the admirable illustrations in this book which he has allowed them to select from his own two-volume work in Arabic, *Miraat El Haramein El Sharifein*, an instructive encyclopædia concerning the Islamite Holy Land. His Excellency's work contains a detailed description of the Holy places, especially of the Kaaba and of the Mosque of the Prophet, notes on the history of the Hejaz before and after the inception of Islam, and a lively picture of the country and its climate, and the life and social customs of its inhabitants. In addition to several hundred illustrations and maps, a large number of historical documents is printed, and there is much useful information for pilgrims.



HIS EXCELLENCY
GENERAL IBRAHIM PASHA RIFAAT

Author of *Miraat El Haremein*, from which all but five of the illustrations have been taken. His Excellency reserves all rights in these pictures.

EL GAHM TO BIRK

as a deserter. He had heard, however, that the Republican Government of Mustapha Kemâl was about to pass an act of amnesty in favour of all who had committed treason against the House of Othmân. When this was confirmed, he said, he should waste no more of his life "among the dogs of Arabia." He was a man of some thirty or thirty-five years, and was thin and unjoyial. He was, however, a very accomplished cook, and he it was who prepared our dinner. I had not eaten cooked food for twenty-four hours, and was consequently in a condition to appreciate the result of his efforts. I can safely say that, so far as I know, nobody since the dawn of history has ever cooked boiled rice-and-samn so perfectly as Sergeant Hilmi, or boiled a leg of goat with such consummate skill as he did that night. I found little time for making observations while the meal was in progress, but I did notice that several large dog-like cats prowled incessantly in the dimness near the walls, and occasionally ran padding across the earthen floor with their head held low like hounds. These cats were practically hairless, perhaps as the result of cutaneous disease. They were big-boned and massive, and went their ways hither and thither in sinister silence.

After the banquet, we carried a couple of kursîs from Umar's hut, and placed them on a little raised space in the open air without. Sitting here, we could dimly see the inky sea on the one hand, and on the other the dark outline of the hills with the moon's bright disc hanging low above them among the glittering stars. Soon we were joined by another party who brought out their bedsteads from the next hut. These were arranged next to our own so as to form a square. The newcomers were an old shaykly man of Birk and

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his guests—three merchants from Mekka. One of these, a tall lithe man named Ahmad, was a native of the sacred city. The other two were Indians who had settled there—one a little quiet clerkly man of poor appearance but in reality very wealthy; the other, his clerk and general assistant, a heavily bearded man of middle height, with a secretive air.

Umar, coming again from his house, placed in the centre of the gathering a wooden stool, on which rested a large tin dish loaded with cut water-melon. This having been eaten, Umar and the Turk Hilmi brought out coffee-pots and finjâns. The merchant, Ahmad, damped with water a handful of tobacco for his shîsha, which had been placed on the ground before him. The shîsha or water-pipe is a troublesome luxury to prepare. First of all, water in correct quantity must be poured into the vase, which, in Arabia, is usually a coconut shell, ornamented with brass and silver. The snake-like tube, with its decorated mouth-piece, is next attached to a short brass pipe in the vase. The smoker carries his tobacco in a little pouch of leather or coloured silk. Their tobacco is commonly purchased in the leaf, like dried stalks of sage. Having taken out the correct quantity, and broken it up small, he pours water upon it as he holds it in his hand. Then, having squeezed the surplus water out of it again, he presses it into the red clay bowl, which is then fitted on the top of the pipe's long upright stem. Everything is now ready for the fire to be applied, but in Arabia this too takes time. Glowing charcoal is the means of ignition, and this usually requires some minutes of time, and much exertion of fanning or blowing, to prepare. When at last the charcoal glows to his satisfaction, the smoker takes a piece or two of it with a small pair of iron tongs,

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and places it on top of the damp tobacco. Now, at last, he begins to smoke; and nobody, observing the shîsha smoker at this moment, would doubt that the trouble taken was worth the end attained. To see Ahmad sink back on his kursî with the foot-long mouth-piece in his hand, to hear his sighs of contentment, his exclamations of pious thankfulness to God, as he drew the first whiffs, was to understand the meaning of the word "kayf."

"El hamdu Lillah," sighed Ahmad, between the whiffs.

"El hamdu Lillah," echoed the sitters on the kursîs. Some of them were engaged in rolling cigarettes of a dry powdery shag. Umar's neighbour was preparing his own shîsha. Umar himself rolled a cigarette and handed it to me, together with a finjân of coffee. Some villagers, climbing the steep path from the beach, passed by us in the pale moonlight, with softly-spoken salutations of peace, which the sitters promptly returned again.

"See us sitting here!" said Ahmad, pursuing his train of thought, "with all good things heaped up! Here in the Land of the Arabs, which has no crops save stones and sand. Whence, O my brothers, come all these good things? Do we supply provision to ourselves?"

"No! by God," responded those beside him. "God provides for whom He will."

"May He be praised and exalted," murmured everyone present.

"Ay, Wallah!" resumed Ahmad. "Here is a land in which is nothing—and here we sit eating and drinking and contented." Here words failed him in the fullness of his heart, as he thought of God's goodness to the

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Arabs in their meagre country. "Everything is from God," he finished. "El hamdu Lillah—Praise to God."

To the Semites, God is always very near and very real—Boundless, Imminent. They feel themselves ever conscious of His Presence, whether in the temple or in the market-place, in sin or in prayer.

The moon, hanging near like a great lamp, rose higher—imperceptibly, but surely: a cool fluttering breeze blew from the northward: a gentle lap-lap of the dark voluptuous waters came faintly to the ear from the beach below: slowly the black shadows drew in to the fences and huts, leaving the ground about us defined in soft light: the fantastic form of the stem of Ahmad's shîsha shot up its three feet of height in the midst of the sitters: while the night air seemed to be informed with a peaceful influence such as could not exist in proximity to civilisation.

We smoked on, and murmured occasional remarks, as a company of contented cats might sit and purr, until I, feeling that no power on earth could longer hold me back from dropping asleep, assumed a recumbent position on my kursî. At once the dozing but watchful Umar rose to his feet, and produced a pillow and a blanket, which he insisted upon helping me to adjust—and so I slept till dawn.

VI

BIRK TO EL GUNFUDA

UPON getting up on the following morning, I was surprised to observe at a few yards' distance from our circle, two young women engaged in the same activity of rising—from kursís placed outside a hut. In Muhammadan countries it is unusual for women to go outside their houses after dark, and it is needless to add that their sleeping in the street all night is unheard of—excepting at Birk apparently. The fact is that women are in a large majority among the population of this village, and as is usual when the supply of an article exceeds the demand for it, they are not very highly prized. I was informed that one might take to wife as many divorced women as he desired—of course within the legal limit of four—by paying a dowry equivalent to half a sovereign for each. Virgin girls were dowered at six or eight times that sum, or more.

I had arranged to travel in the company of Ahmad the merchant and another Mekkan named Hasan, and the two Indians were also to accompany us. Having breakfasted on bread and milk at the house of Muhammad, I went with him to the market-place to buy provisions for my journey. The staple dish for travellers in this part of Arabia is boiled rice and lentils mixed. To this may be added, after it is cooked, samn, meat, onions, dates, or merely salt and pepper. The usual drink is tea, prepared with much sugar but no milk. I purchased a water-skin (girba); a supply of rice, lentils,

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onions, dates, dried bread, tea, sugar, honey, and a couple of water-melons. These things were placed in three small baskets.

About an hour after el 'asr (mid-afternoon) Umar came to the house of Muhammad to inform me that my fellow-travellers were about to walk to the outskirts of the village, where it had been arranged that I and they should join the caravan. Thereupon Muhammad called in a youth, who shouldered my saddle-bags and girba. My host and I then divided my baskets of provisions between us, and saying "bismillah," we set off with Umar to the place of *rendezvous*. Our way led down into a hollow on the northern side of the village. Here was a grove of date palms, which grew so close under the hill of Birk that they were invisible from most parts of that village. Passing through these palm-trees, we came to a half-ruined gateway in a wholly ruined wall which extended from the low rocky spurs of the eastern hills to the sea—a distance of a mile and a half. On the crests of several of the hills which backed the village were half-ruined stone towers.

Arrived at the gate, we found the two Mekkans and the two Indians seated in its shadow, where we joined them. We had spent some minutes in desultory conversation, and in throwing stones at an unfortunate dog whose inquisitiveness seemed to be proof against even the broadest hints—and the heaviest—when the inane snout of the leading camel of our string came in sight, wavering sleepily through the palm stems, apparently on its way to keep an appointment for the day after to-morrow.

The string of camels had not yet reached us when one of the drivers passed energetically ahead of them, and approached us briskly.

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"Up! Mount!" he cried busily.

My companions rose as one man, and stood in the sun to await the crawling camels. Arabs never do anything with precision. An Englishman would have remained seated in the shade until his animal stood before him, and then risen and at once mounted. My companions, having risen to their feet, stood there for fully half an hour, while the inevitable argument about nothing proceeded between themselves and the camel-drivers. It takes Arabs a long time to see what is essential and what is not. They are a race of pursuers of the side issue. The irrelevant has only to enter their thoughts in order to become the theme. So now they argued among themselves as to whether it would not be better to delay the start until they had prayed the sunset prayer. The camel-drivers said, "At sunset we will stand for you to alight and pray. Let us, then, start!" The Mekkans said, "O shaykh! it is better we pray here before we start, and then march straight on." Said one of the Indians, "Couch this camel, O my uncle! that I may spread my bedding upon his back." Said the Bedouin, "Let you spread with him standing, for now we start." Said one of the Mekkans, "Good! then we will start. Nothing against us!" Said the other Mekkan, "No! O shaykh, let it be after the sunset prayer." Here one of the Indians, having commenced to spread his lihâf (quilt) on a camel's back, the Bedouins made their camels couch, which before they had refused to do. Finally, at about five minutes before sunset, saying, "We have surrendered ourselves unto God," we all mounted and moved out of the gate. Arrived a few yards out on the sandy plain, one of the Mekkans commenced to chant the adân. It was sunset. All stopped and dismounted; and here, within a

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stone's throw of our starting-place, we formed in a row to repeat the sunset prayer.

Our way now lay over a perfectly level sandy plain by the sea-shore. At intervals we passed, in the gathering dusk, groups of the dôm palm, and of the cactus shrub which bears the prickly pear. As we still passed on, the bleating of goats came forlornly out of the falling darkness, and anon we padded silently towards a group of dark standing figures—elusive and unreal in the moonlight. These, I thought, as we slowly approached them, are black-shrouded women of the Arabs herding their flocks in the silent night. But as we passed over the pale surface of the sand abreast of them, I saw they were nothing but black scrub-bushes growing there. Travelling thus by night on the tall pad-footed beasts, it seems to the rider borne at such height aloft, that he is silently gliding or swimming over a yielding unstable surface. Or it seems that the pale half-seen ground beneath him is fluid, and itself moves flowing past; and in it dark forms of unknown shapes appear dimly, gliding out of the limitless black spaces under the stars—till going closely by them, he sees in the moonlight that they are nothing but shrubs and trees. Into this silent ghostliness, the cry of a jackal comes as a sudden commonplace sound of the actual world.

Marching all through the night without a halt, we reached 'Imaq at earliest dawn. Here dom palms and sidr (lote) trees spread their branches by the side of a spring of water, and the cool shaded ground beneath their swaying verdure was green with coarse grass. Further out on the plain was some small cultivation of durra. There was no permanent village here, but the Arabs encamp about the water in the time of the date harvest.

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Here we rested all day, dozing out the hot hours in the grateful shade of the trees. At meal-times the division of the necessary labour was as follows—the camel-men gathered scrub for firewood, and fetched water; the Mekkans kindled the cooking-fire and Ahmad's shîsha; the Indians did the cooking; and I helped everybody—with advice and raw provisions chiefly.

At el 'asr we mounted again, and proceeded northward across the desert plain, which was here very wide, so that the eastern hills were only very dimly visible from our line of march. We saw a few flashes of lightning over the hills, and also a rainbow. Rain was evidently falling there from the heavy black clouds, and a few drops fell upon us as these passed over to seaward. The plain was thickly covered with camel grass, which vegetation, although it is wire-like and unbeautiful at close quarters, gave to the wide prospect a beauty of fresh greenness which was very solacing to the eyes. Occasionally we passed thick clumps of the ithl or tamarisk tree, and pleasant was the song of the afternoon wind through their plume-like branches.

Having marched ceaselessly all night, we passed at last, before dawn, nodding on our camels between sleeping and waking, through some thick clumps of scrub and tamarisk, and found ourselves in the dirty and ruinous village of Hallî. This is the frontier place between El Hijâz and El Yemen (or 'Asîr), and was at this time already in the occupation of the Wahnâbîs.

Hallî is a village of rush huts with a mud mosque, as are most of the coastal villages of western Arabia. It lies on the low plain at a little distance from the sea; and close to it, but further inland, is another village called Muckshîsh. The inhabitants of these villages

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are a miserable shifty-looking crowd, and they have the reputation of being incorrigible thieves. They are also procurers of slaves, and my companion, Ahmad, wanted to buy a slave-girl here, or said he did. The old crone to whom he disclosed his proposition said she could show him a perfect specimen, but when she mentioned the price—it was seventy pounds—he did not pursue the matter. He told me that the “best sort possible” sell in Jidda for thirty pounds. This, however, I know to be far too low a figure at the present time.

We heard that there was a garrison force of four of Ibn Sa‘ûd’s Wahhâbîs at Hallî; but we saw nothing of them, and nobody attempted to inspect either us or our baggage. There are in Hallî between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and fifty huts. Its population may be five hundred souls.

The inland boundaries of ‘Asîr are somewhat indefinite, as are those of every other principality in the peninsula. This province constitutes a rough square, the south-western side of which is formed by some seventy miles of the Red Sea coast-line—from the Wâdi ‘Ashûr at Hallî on the north, to a point near the Idrîsî capital, Sobyâ, on the south. From Hallî, the north-western boundary line extends to the borders of the great desert called the Empty Quarter. On the south-east, ‘Asîr is bounded by the Yemen, and on the north-east by the Empty Quarter. With the exception of the narrow plain of the Tihâma, this province is everywhere very mountainous.

Under the Turks, the capital was the mountain town of Abhâ, which is situated in the centre of the province. At present Abhâ is in the possession of Ibn Sa‘ûd, as is the territory to the east and northward of that town; while the ruler of the Yemen has recently

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occupied a considerable portion of the southern part of the province.

The population of 'Asîr may be a quarter of a million souls, one-fifth of whom are wandering Bedu while the remainder are settled. The bulk of the population inhabit the mountain districts. They are of the Shâfi'i school in religion, but their territory having been overrun and they themselves influenced by the Wahhâbîs at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they retain many of the customs of those puritans even to the present time. The recent re-occupation of a large part of 'Asîr by the Wahhâbîs was therefore welcomed by the majority of the inhabitants. Like the Wahhâbîs, they do not mark the graves of their dead, nor build domes above the tombs of the great; and their mosques are devoid of ornamentation.

Sulaymân Shafîg Kâmil Pasha, a former Turkish governor of 'Asîr, says of the inhabitants of the mountains of this province: "The most eloquent (or, the purest in speech) of the people of Arabia are the dwellers in the mountains of 'Asîr, and they use a truer pronunciation than do the common people of any other district. The tribes of Rabî'a and El Jahra, who dwell in Wâdi Dhalâ and Wâdi-r-Rudûm, speak the pure language (i.e. the language used in writing), and their pronunciation possesses an ease and a sweet melody as of versed poetry."

The two tribes which he mentions are said to number collectively some three or four thousand souls. They rear camels and goats in their wâdi dîras, but although they are said to possess abundant water, they do not till the ground. They are a peace-loving people, having the reputation of kindness and generosity to the guest, and the ghazû or raid is not practised among them.

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Their tents are constructed of grass matting, which fact seems to argue the existence within their territory of lands sufficiently well watered to grow reeds without cultivation.

According to Kâmil Pasha, rich deposits of iron, lead, and sulphur exist in the mountain groups called Jebel Sodâ and Jebel Sûga, westward of Abhâ. Copper is found in the dîra of Bani Shahar, which lies in the hills to the eastward of El Gunfuda, and rock-salt is common in the foot-hills which border the coastal plain. Petroleum has been discovered in the Farisân Islands which form part of this province.

The whole of the sea-coast of 'Asîr is protected by a chain of sand-banks and rocks, which renders it inaccessible to shipping, save at one or two small anchorages, as El Gahm.

Throughout this province, vegetation is less scanty than in any other part of Arabia save the Yemen. In the coastal plain, date, dôm, tamarind, and sidr trees, occur in scanty patches, together with fields of millet and dukhn. Bananas, peaches, limes, and almonds grow in the hill districts.

The monsoon rains fall copiously in November and December, and running streams may then be seen for days together. The wâdis run westward to the Tihâma, or eastward to the great desert, and the villages of the settled Arabs are built along their banks. A perennial and copious supply of water for irrigating the Tihâma might be ensured to the inhabitants by the construction of dams across some of these watercourses, at points where they pass through ravines in the rocky hills. In the uplands, ground water exists almost everywhere, at a depth of from ten to thirty feet below the surface.

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The people of 'Asîr, like those of the Hijâz, are extremely jealous of the intrusion of non-Muslims into their country.

In the Hijâz, many tales are told of the obscene and bestial practices obtaining among many of the tribes of 'Asîr and El Yemen. One of these has it that the men of some of these tribes lend their wives to their guests. Others, if less heinous, are much more disgusting, and whether any of them are true or not I am unable to say.

Having rested and refreshed ourselves, we left the village of Hallî at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and rode for two miles through extensive millet fields to a place called Sulb.

This is a large green oasis of date palms and sidr trees. Some of the latter were laden with fruit, and our Arabs ran to collect the windfalls. The fruit of the sidr tree is a hard round berry, closely resembling a small crab-apple in outward appearance and in taste. It contains, however, a single stone similar to that of the cherry. This fruit is called Nabq, and sometimes the name is also given to the tree.

After passing through Sulb, we still found millet cultivation in patches for some distance; until all cultivation finally ceased, leaving the barren waste unadorned and undisturbed. Before dawn we reached a dry, shallow wâdi-bed, where we found a small collection of rush huts. This village, which is called Yebba, exists by reason of the wells which have been dug here in the wâdi. All the well-water along this coast is brackish.

We remained at Yebba only till midday, when we again mounted and moved on, through thick scrub

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at first, until coming to the end of this, we found ourselves on a bare far-stretching plain of sand. The mountain range, far away to the eastward, was nearly invisible. As we advanced, it seemed to me that we were heading straight towards the sea. Then I saw that what I took to be the open sea was apparently a broad inlet which extended for miles inland. At its further edge were lines of trees, the forms of which were reflected in the water. Then I observed on the nearer bank, at a distance of two or three miles, the stone-built houses of a town. About and among these houses were the black-clad forms of men, but whether they stood to gaze at our passing camels, or whether they were moving about, I could not determine. Still we shuffled slowly forward over the flat plain, which was here encrusted with a shimmering deposit of salt; but the strange thing was, that although we continually advanced, we never seemed to approach any nearer to the waters of the inlet with its town and its trees. At last it dawned upon me that the whole spectacle was a mirage. The water and the town and the trees were no more than pulsing waves of refracted light over the crystal-strewn plain.

Late in the afternoon we passed by a long ridge or eminence, on our left hand, which formed a line of cliffs along the sea. Having passed this point, we rounded a curve in the coast and then, looking back, I saw the seaward face of these cliffs. I think they were probably of limestone or even chalk, as they looked too white to be sandstone. Several stone-built houses in ruins stood at intervals along their top. These, I heard, had once been country houses of some of the Ashrâf (sing. sharîf—a descendant of the Prophet) of Mekka.

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At sunset we came in sight of the walls of El Gunfuda. The face of the desert here was covered by little hummocks of sand, topped by scrub. The setting sun seemed to tint even the air with a blend of old gold and rose as we passed through a large gap in the fortifications into the town. It gilded the swarthy faces of two gaunt Bedouins, armed with rifles, who eyed us with brief but piercing glance. Tall, and burnt by the sun to the colour of over-roasted coffee berries, with close-cropped moustaches and tufted chins, there was something in the carriage of these two braves which suggested that they were in abnormal surroundings. In their dark eyes, and on their brows, sat a stern intolerant expression; and a little detail of their clothing left no further doubt as to their identity. They wore on their heads, over the kefiya or kerchief, not the hair-rope 'agâl, but a rolled piece of white calico, as it were a turban. They were mudayyina (in the singular—"mudayyin," meaning one who is given up to religion—a term applied to the Wahnâbîs), and here in the Hijâz they sat in the seats of recent conquerors.

Scarcely had we ridden past these guards when I heard the sound of a deep throaty voice behind us, calling upon our camel-drivers to stop. The man who was at the head of our string stopped his animal.

"What hinders?" he asked.

"You are from Hallî?" asked one of the Wahnâbîs, who had turned to follow us.

"Ay, Wallah!" replied the other briefly.

"The loads—in them is what?" asked the mudayyin.

"By God! there is in them nothing," replied the man with conviction.

The Wahnâbî went up to the leading camel, and felt a sack.

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"This—what is it?" he demanded sternly.

"There is in it nothing—except rice," he replied.

"And this?" questioned the Wahnâbî, feeling a sack on the second camel.

"This," repeated the camel-driver, feeling at the sack in his turn, "this is sugar."

Suddenly the Wahnâbî looked searchingly at my fellow-travellers and myself, as we sat our camels, waiting.

"These riders—they are who?" he demanded.

"These . . ." began the camel-driver, but my companions cut him short.

"We are of the people of Mekka," they said.

"All of you?" he persisted.

"Ay, Wallah! of the people of Mekka," we all replied.

The object of all of us was to get past the guards into the town without delay. To do that we had to keep the Wahnâbî in a good humour, and not allow him to become suspicious. In the East, this sort of thing is usually accomplished by agreeing verbally with everything your questioner may say.

"Drive on!" ordered the guard briefly; and himself turned to walk beside our camels.

"To where?" asked the camel-driver.

"To the place of the Amîr," replied the Wahnâbî.

For a moment, seeing this guard keeping us under watch, I experienced a feeling of uncertainty. We had scarcely advanced fifty yards among the rush huts of the town, however, when the merchant Ahmad, catching sight of some Mekkan acquaintances who were passing, slid down off his camel and joined them, leaving the rest of us to proceed without him. Our Wahnâbî escort made no comment about this, and I

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concluded, therefore, that his object in accompanying our caravan was to see that the loads which the camels bore were not unloaded until they had been inspected by the officers of the government. This proved to be the case. Passing through lanes of rush fences, with an occasional wall or house of mud, we came at last to an open space on a low platform-like eminence by the sea-shore. Here was a two-storeyed stone building, over which waved the green flag of Nejd—though its colour was scarcely to be distinguished in the falling dusk. On one side of this open space stood a large barn-like building, constructed of mud bricks. This, said my fellow-traveller, Hasan, was the custom-house. While he was giving me this information, he absent-mindedly lighted a cigarette and began to smoke. Suddenly a clear stern voice behind us said, in tones of anger and loathing, "O thou, drink not smoke!" We turned at once to see who had spoken, and Hasan dropped his cigarette hastily to the ground, and trod upon it. At the same moment, the Wahnâbi who had accompanied us from the gate cried out viciously, "O dog! Akhs! et-tittun (tobacco)! Art thou a Muslim or a châfir?" (for "kâfir," i.e. unbeliever). Behind us in the gloom we saw standing a handsome youth, wearing a snow-white thawb of new calico, over which was strapped a leathern cartridge-belt filled with a row of revolver cartridges. From the belt depended a revolver in a polished leathern holster. Over his right shoulder ran a strap, which carried the silver-hilted sword which he wore at his left side. The youth, who was beardless, may have been eighteen or twenty years of age, and under his white head-kerchief he wore long ringlets of black hair which reached to the shoulder.

"You are from whence?" he asked with the quiet

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sternness of a naturally polite youngster impressed with the importance of his position and responsibility.

"From Hallî," we replied.

"Are you of the people of Mekka?" he asked.

"Yes! of the people of Mekka," we assured him.

"It is upon you not to drink smoke," he said, and turning away, he left us.

Ahmad now appeared, coming out of the surrounding darkness accompanied by two other men wearing the Mekkan dress. He bade us unload our baggage from the camels, and accompany him to a hut which had been placed at his disposal. Before leaving the camels, I approached our Wahhâbî escort.

"Tell me, O shaykh!" I said, "that youth—is he the Amîr?"

"He is not the Amîr," he replied, "but of the Amîr's family."

"Of the Amîr's family," I repeated, and added as I turned away: "Peace be upon you."

"Peace be upon those who follow the Guidance" (the Korân), he replied acidly. The puritan Wahhâbî had seen my companion smoking, and a man is judged by the company he keeps.

VII

EL GUNFUDA TO EL LÎTH AND WÂDI YELAMLAM

THERE is no wakâla or inn in El Gunfuda, but there are a number of empty huts which the owners let for hire to travellers.

The population of the place consists of some 1,500 inhabitants. The town is built for the most part of rush huts which are square in form; unlike those of Birk, which, as has been noted, are beehive-shaped. In El Gunfuda the huts are lined with grass matting, as though it were wall-paper, secured to the walls by means of wooden skewers. There are a few mud houses in the town, and the two mosques and the Government headquarters are constructed of stone. The shape of the minarets of these mosques is peculiar, and I do not remember to have seen minarets of a similar form elsewhere. They are square and squat, some fifty feet in height, and the top is surmounted by a little round tower.

There is no wharf here, and the small coasting steamers which occasionally call at El Gunfuda anchor at a little distance from the shore. A shallow wâdi, some 150 yards wide, runs down to the sea, close to the town on the southern side. This watercourse, called Wâdi Hârûn, is in flood for a few days each year at the season of the monsoon rains.

The market-place is a street of mud hovels, a hundred yards long, with another shorter street lead-

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ing out of it. Here are sold dates, tobacco, tea, sugar, rice, lentils, dukhn, onions, bread, and a few other more or less edible substances. The latter include several sorts of sweetmeats, some of them of startling colours. Here myriads of flies sat at the receipt of custom, and took toll so assiduously that I am convinced that had I stayed to watch them a short time, I might have seen the lumps of sweetmeat disappear before my eyes, like pieces of ice placed in the sun.

There were also some good water-melons, some bananas from the hill groves towards Abhâ, and a few little apples.

Sauntering in this emporium with Abdul Câdir, one of my Indian fellow-travellers, on the morning after my arrival in the town, I observed a gaunt half-negro person sitting cross-legged in the deep dust of the street. Before him on the ground were spread several pieces of old sack-cloth and Bedouin hair-cloth, and upon these was displayed a remarkable collection of old brass coffee-pots, saucepans, camel halters, old knives, pieces of iron chain, rags, old sandals, pestles and mortars for grinding coffee, and fifty other old and battered indefinite articles. Though not perhaps unique, it was an amazing collection, and although the owner might have restocked his "shop" with intrinsically more valuable goods from any good-sized European dust-heap, yet here in the desert town every rag and bone had its value.

My companion, Abdul Câdir, wished to buy a knife. Accordingly we approached the sitting merchant, and soon the process of price-adjustment was in full swing. While this was going forward, I noticed a solid-looking dark-green object lying among the coffee-pots, and picked it up. It was a little carved Chinese image, and

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I felt certain it was of jade. It was the size of a small tea-cup, and represented a sitting Chinaman, pot-bellied and repulsive.

"What is this?" I asked of the Arab.

"Do I know?" he responded amiably.

"You will sell it for how much?" I asked.

The man did not answer for a moment, but glanced furtively at me, endeavouring to estimate my paying-power.

"Half a rîyâl," he said at last.

"Whence came this stone?" I asked him.

"A man was thrown up on the shore of the sea, and this was found in his pocket, and the mouth of the pocket was sewn up," he replied.

"Was he dead—the man?" I asked.

"Ay, wallah! Dead," he said unconcernedly. "The sharks had eaten a leg of his legs and his left hand."

"An Arab?" I asked.

"No, O shaykh! His appearance was like the people of Bokhâra," he said.

Abdul Câdir put down the knife he had been examining.

"Did you bury him?" he asked of the Arab.

"No! He was an unbeliever. The dogs ate him. Allah curse the unbelievers!" replied the Arab.

"How did you know he was an unbeliever?" asked Abdul Câdir.

"He was not circumcised," he said, "so we left him to the dogs."

"Perhaps he was of the people of China," I said.

"It is possible. And God is More Knowing," rejoined the Arab, re-arranging some of his stock.

"In any case he should have been buried; only not washed or prayed over," said Abdul Câdir.

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"Nothing against us. The dogs ate him," said the Arab again.

Abdul Câdir having bought his knife, we made our way back to the hut. I would have purchased the Chinese image had it not been for the fact that the mere possession of graven images is a serious offence among Muslims.

We were informed by our landlord's son, a pleasant youth named Mahmûd, that the Wahhâbîs had occupied El Gunfuda with only seven men. This force had since been increased, and at the time of my visit consisted of twenty-five men. Mahmûd's opinion was that one Wahhâbî would have been quite sufficient to keep order in the town, as everybody was terrified of the Ikhwân of Nejd. Everyone with whom I spoke on the subject, however, admitted that the Nejders had committed no oppression or injustice in El Gunfuda, and that food was cheaper there than it had been in the days of King Husayn.

My companions made their arrangements to leave El Gunfuda on the day after our arrival, but I had found the younger of the Indian merchants, Abdurrahmân, rather too inquisitive for my liking, and I decided to let them proceed on their way without me. This man had observed me on two occasions writing notes. I do not think he knew what I was writing, as before he had a chance to see it I was able to open my note-book at its other end, where I had half written out the supplications and prayers used in the pilgrimage. However, I told Mahmûd, who was arranging for the hire of camels, that I wanted to rest in El Gunfuda a day longer. Thus when my four companions set out I remained behind.

On the following evening Mahmûd appeared in

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the compound of our hut, followed by a Bedouin who was leading the camel which was to carry me to El Lîth. Having loaded my saddle-bags and other gear on the animal, we proceeded with it to the market-place in order to join the caravan which was about to set out for El Lîth. I found there were two Mekkans of the merchant class travelling with us, and the remainder of the camels composing the caravan, twenty in number, were laden with sacks of rice and other merchandise.

Soon after sunset we started, and travelling all night in a north-easterly direction, we halted at daylight in the open plain. We had marched for several hours after starting through lines of growing reeds, which are cultivated in the desert about El Gunfuda, to raise building material for the huts in the villages. The latter part of our journey was over flat sandy wastes, tufted with camel grass and occasional thorn bushes.

There was no water at our halting-place, and the only shelter from the sun's fiery heat was that supplied by a few scattered thorn bushes, bare of foliage. My fellow travellers were pleasant enough as chance acquaintances, as are most of the Arab race. One, middle-aged with a greying beard and crafty eyes, was named Abdul Latîf. During our halts he smoked continuously, using a shîsha with a bowl as large as a tea-cup. This bowl he filled with jurâk, which is a sticky solid mixture of tamarind, molasses or date extract, sandalwood, tobacco, and usually opium and cloves. It is a very strong smoking mixture, producing a pungent aromatic smoke, and requires frequent fresh burning charcoal placed in the pipe-bowl to keep it alight. The Arabs say that a smoker of jurâk requires to eat much good food, and that its use excites the

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sexual appetite. I tried it once in Mekka subsequently, and made myself dizzy with three inhalations. Abdul Latîf's companion, a polite youngster named Sâlih, lost no time in handing me a cup of their tea as soon as he had prepared it. This act brought us into fellowship, and from then onwards we pooled our company and our provisions. Lying in the scanty shade of the thorn bushes, we did our best to slumber away the hot midday hours until the time of el 'asr, when, the camels having been caught and loaded again, we resumed our march. In the daytime the Arabs turn their burden camels loose, to graze, with the saddles still on their backs. Most of the animals have large galls and sores under the saddle, and the burning sun striking upon their bare backs would inflame them the more. Their thousands of years' experience in camel-mastership do not seem to have been sufficient for the Arabs to have evolved a really good saddle for burden camels.

At sunset we crossed a shallow wâdi, some two hundred yards in breadth, and found ourselves before the village of El Mudhaylif. It had been the intention of our camel-drivers to encamp at El Mudhaylif that morning, but having been delayed by losing the track during the night, and the sun rising, they had put down in the open plain. This miscalculation gave us a night's rest, which is an unusual luxury in Arabian travelling. The Arabs prefer to march by night, whatever the season of the year. To a stranger, this arrangement is doubly distasteful, as it is not only physically uncomfortable, but it limits observation of the country.

El Mudhaylif is a small village which owes its existence to the proximity of several deep wells. The water from these wells is brackish, and reeks strongly of the disgusting smell of camels. At the village a weekly

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market is held, to which the Bedouins come in from the surrounding wastes to buy or barter rice, clothing, and other town wares from El Gunfuda. El Mudhaylif is famed above other places for its camel ticks and rats, and distinction in such matters is not easily achieved in Arabia. The ground for a mile and more about the wells is infested with the former pest, and several of these vermin showed their appreciation of European blood by fastening themselves to my toes while I slept. As for the rats, it is only necessary to relate that cats were selling at three mejîdis (six shillings) per head in El Mudhaylif, and three mejîdis is a week's salary for a man in El Mudhaylif, or a month's salary if you feed him at your own expense.

We slept the night at this place, and left it on the afternoon of the next day. Marching over sand-flats with occasional undulations dotted with scrub, we came at midnight to a large wâdi-bed called Dôga. We halted here to empty our girbas of the unclean Mudhaylif water, and to refill them at the well. The water here was the best I had tasted since leaving Birk. We then continued our march until dawn, when we encamped in the open desert amongst dry thorn bushes and camel grass. The mountains to the eastward were only faintly visible from this point.

Soon after we had halted, a score of Yemen Arabs from Sanaa, mounted on little rats of donkeys, passed up and camped further on. They were pilgrims on the way to Mekka.

At mid-afternoon we mounted again, and rode all through the night, arriving as the sun rose at Naji'a. Here there are six large wells which yield brackish water. Large flocks of goats and sheep, together with some droves of camels, were being watered as we

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came up. We rested here during the heat of the day, and when the flaming sun began to sink westwards we mounted and pursued our journey over a flat sandy plain until soon after midnight, when we got among the low sand dunes which extend in a broad belt about the town of El Lîth. As the light slowly smudged its way into the eastern sky, we saw before us a small grove of palm-trees, and behind this, on rising ground, the blunt square outlines of low mud-built houses. The sun was rising above the grey dunes as we urged our beasts up the yellow slope towards the rush fences of El Lîth. A small gateway in the first fence led into a compound beside the house of one named Sayyid Ali, who was the principal merchant of the town. The ground within this compound was littered with old straw, camel dung, and other refuse; and leaving the camel-drivers to look after their beasts, the two Mek-kans and I passed through another gate, which gave access to a small courtyard with a clean floor of beaten earth. Beyond this was Sayyid Ali's house—an oblong mud structure of a single storey. On one side of the courtyard was a small thatch shed open at one side. This was the guest chamber. My companions, who knew the place, made their way towards the shed, bidding me to accompany them.

Having performed our ablutions and prayed, which matter is always the first care of the better-class town Arabians, we sat in the guest-hut to await events. Abdul Latîf, having prepared his shîsha, sat contemplatively smoking, while Sâlih rolled and smoked frequent cigarettes. Occasionally they exchanged remarks about the prices of rice and sugar, of goats and tobacco. Myself, I sat drooping somewhat with the fatigue and famishment of the long aching night

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marches and the comfortless noonday halts of my long journey. I shall never cease to admire the careless fatalism with which the Arabians accept famine or banquet, idleness or strenuous exertion. Inured to their hard lives from youth, in a land where the sudden strife of Bedouin tribes, or the no more sudden storms of the seas, may plunge even the great cities into semi-starvation; a land in which a journey of thirty miles is a day-long effort of physical strength, they expect little from life in this world, and, never railing against their fate, they submit with patient serenity to God's will.

Presently there entered the courtyard a cadaverous-looking young man, whose Bedouin clothes of thawb and cloak and head-kerchief were clean and handsome. He greeted us with the salutation of peace, and then, as we resumed our seats after rising to greet him, he called in another youth of a humbler aspect and bade him go and prepare coffee and breakfast for us.

While we sat eating our breakfast of dates and bread, there entered a short thin old man leaning upon a long staff. He was dressed in a snow-white thawb and kerchief, and wore a small white beard and moustache. His face bore an expression of grave kindness as he greeted all present in a feeble voice. This was Sayyid Ali, a descendant of the Prophet. Later, as I began to question him of the Wahnâbî invasion, he surprised me by frankly condemning it. Sayyid Ali was the first among these careful Arabs whom I had heard say a good word for the ex-king, though in their hearts all the town-dwellers and most of the Hijâzi Bedouins hated the Wahnâbîs. Before my departure, my host's servant discreetly asked me several times how much I proposed to give the old man in return for his entertaining me in his house. Old Ali himself begged me to

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return and settle in El Lîth after the pilgrimage, saying that he would provide me with a wife.

El Lîth is situated some three miles from the sea-shore, on a small hill which is scarcely more than a mound. Its houses, square-shaped and for the most part of a single storey, are constructed of mud with the addition of wooden beams. There are also some rush huts, and the local coffee-house is a square enclosure fenced with reeds and partly roofed with thatch at one end. The coffee-drinkers sit on the floor of beaten earth. Water is procured from two wells, a quarter of a mile and half a mile respectively outside the village, to the eastward. There is a considerable grove of date palms to the north-west of the village, and water-melons are also cultivated. The original inhabitants are of the tribe of Curaysh.

Later in the day, as we sat in the stifling heat of the shed, there came in one who had just arrived from Mekka. This was a rather thin, sallow-faced person, with a heavy moustache and a bristly chin. His name was Shafîg and he was a mutawwif, though the object of his present journey was trade. Shafîg, learning that I was a hâjji, lost no time in improving my acquaintance; and as he himself would not return to Mekka for some days, he gave me a note addressed to a friend of his, one Abdurrahmân, who, he assured me, would be pleased to receive me under his roof in Mekka.

My encounter with this man was a fortunate chance, as having broken with Abdulla and Jamîl, I knew nobody in the Holy City to whose house I could go upon my arrival there.

Arabs never miss an opportunity of picking up unearned increment, and are eternally trying to evolve new ways of doing it. Accordingly, a former Sharîf of

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Mekka, 'Aun er-Rafîg (he died, full of years and piety, in 1323 A.H.), bethought him of selling to the mutawwifs the right to act as hosts and guides to pilgrims coming from specified places. In this way it became compulsory for every pilgrim from, say, Jaffa, to place himself in the hands of the mutawwif who had bought the Jaffa rights from the Sharîf. If he did not do this he would be obliged to live as a Pasha, and hire a house and servants for himself, or as a beggar and sleep in the street, for no other than the Jaffa mutawwif dare give him hospitality for fear that he should be accused of "hâjji stealing."

When Ibn Sa'ûd took Mekka he endeavoured to abolish this custom, and gave it out in a proclamation that the hâjjis were no longer bound to follow the mutawwifs of their districts, but were free to lodge with whom they would. "The Mighty Mahmûd" could not prevail in that matter, however, for public opinion is too strong in this fraternal and insulated community. The mutawwifs' rights are hereditary, and the system of allotting districts to certain mutawwifs is now once more officially recognised, as it was in the days of the Sharîfs. Most pilgrims are provided with the name of their mutawwif by the shaykh of their village, or by some hâjji who has already been to Mekka. All they have to do, therefore, on arrival at the Holy City, is to ask for their host.

An hour or so after noon, Sayyid Ali sent his servant to call us into the house to eat. Upon entering the low doorway, before which hung a piece of grass matting, I found myself in a long narrow apartment, the earthen floor of which was beaten hard and flat and covered with large pieces of rush matting. The room was some ten feet wide and twenty-five feet long. On the floor at

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one end old Ali was sitting cross-legged, counting off his muttered exclamations of religious fervour on his string of beads. In contrast with the flaming heat of the midday sunshine without, the interior of the mud-built house was as cool as some sweet tree-shaded garden.

"Subhân Allah!" muttered Sayyid Ali, moving his beads one by one along the string. "Allah Akbar! Lâ Ilâha ill Allah!" (Glory to God! God is greatest! There is no god but The God!)

Saying "bismillah," I and my three companions, Abdul Latîf, Sâlih and Shafîg, seated ourselves before the old man, and having taken his hand we sat back against the mud wall. Ali handed to each of us a little plaited grass fan, and as I flapped mine slowly to and fro, I looked about me. The room in which we sat was bare of all furniture save the mats on the floor, and a kursî at the farther end. One other embellishment the room possessed, and that was a collection of glass and of china vessels, ranged along a narrow shelf high up on the long wall opposite to me. The glass vessels were empty bottles, most of them still bearing coloured labels adorned with names and trade-marks. There were vinegar bottles, sauce bottles, mineral-water bottles, pickle bottles, and even a beer bottle or two. These priceless pieces had doubtless been acquired, during years of keen collecting, from the cook's galleys of the little steamers which occasionally call at El Lîth. The china consisted of a number of thick earthenware plates, cups, and saucers—each of them differing from most of the others in pattern. They were far too precious to be used, excepting as ornaments. Most of the bottles were hung by the neck, like condemned malefactors, from the under side of the wooden shelf. This was done,

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I suppose, in order to ensure that their admirers did not carry them away, or drop them while examining them.

Having eaten our dinner of rice and boiled meat, followed by water-melon and coffee, we retired to the shed where our baggage was lying, leaving Ali to enjoy his siesta.

At mid-afternoon I went with Shafîg to the mosque to perform the prayer of el 'asr. Like all the non-Turkish mosques of Western Arabia, that of El Lîth consists of a square walled enclosure, unroofed save for a narrow cloister at the mihrâb end.

Walking in the village after leaving the mosque, we found the narrow dust-filled channel between mud hovels which is the market-place packed confusedly with groaning camels. Some were couched in the hot dust: some stood looking awkwardly about them, making little futile groans of protest at the general discomfort of life; others, in the act of kneeling, snarled and bubbled at their Bedouin masters. The latter cursed throatily as they jerked at the halters with an air of tense energy, as is their manner. One camel persisted in trying to rise, although its doubled fore-leg was bound with the end of its halter. Eventually the Bedouin in charge of it picked up a block of stone, weighing probably thirty pounds, and threw it on the camel's head. This act achieved its object completely, as the unfortunate animal baraked obediently, making feeble groans. These camels were being loaded with grain for Mekka. Jidda being closed, all the imported articles for the Holy City had to be landed at El Lîth or El Gunfuda.

My two companions wished to buy some sacks of sugar here, in order to sell it in Mekka at a profit. For

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this purpose they found it necessary to stay for the night in El Lîth. Although caravans were leaving for Mekka every few hours, I decided to remain with them, being glad of the opportunity of enjoying a night's rest.

At sunset the next day (21st June) we mounted the camels which Sayyid Ali had hired for us, and made our way to the edge of the palm groves, where the remainder of the caravan was assembled. Passing through the palms, we came out upon a sandy plain unrelieved by hills or vegetation as far as the eye could see. The camel track led across this plain in a direction slightly east of north. Darkness fell quickly about us as we advanced. The camels padded on ceaselessly over the elusive surface of the ground, half seen in the moonless night.

The light of dawn found our beasts still pacing forward with the blind fatalism of sleep-walkers, and showed us the sharp outline of a low range of rock hills to eastward. At sunrise we reached Khadra. Here the track entered among the low spurs and detached rocks of the foot-hills. To westward lay the flat plain which extends to the sea, while to the east and north-east the hills rose dimly, rank behind rank, in the far distance. Great pinnacles and buttresses of granite emerged, stark and black, from the sea of golden sand. From a distance some of these masses of rock, perpendicular-sided and flat-topped, looked like old massive castles standing in the hot silent wilderness, and it was difficult to believe they were not the work of men's hands.

At Khadra there is a well of brackish water, and about it a few rush huts have been built, whose owners sell twisted ropes of dry camel grass as fodder for the beasts of the passing caravans—for, in the country hereabouts, as bare of vegetation as London Bridge,

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even the camel can find nothing to eat. The well lies in the bottom of a large sandy depression, and all about it the caravans encamp.

Upon arrival at this place I found that my two companions, Abdul Latîf and Sâlih, had become detached, with their camels, from our caravan during the night. I did not see them again on the journey, but meeting Sâlih subsequently in Mekka, I learnt that together with one of the camel-drivers they had travelled by the route of Saadiya, which passes near Et-Tâif, while I and the remaining two Bedouins went by Yelamlam—a route somewhat nearer the sea-coast.

As I sat eating with my Bedouin companions—they were of the tribe of 'Atayba—I could not refrain from complimenting them upon the unwinking skill with which they swallowed fistfuls of hot boiled rice, the temperature of which I judged to be something over 200 degrees Fahrenheit. They grinned modestly at my remark, and one of them, Khâlîd by name, still continuing to claw up handfuls of the scalding mess and knead it into hard compact balls before passing it smartly into his mouth, told me that in the 'Atayba dîra (territory) he had frequently sat down to eat from a boiling pot with the fire still underneath it. The other rascal, sitting with us on the sand round the tin dish, swore with great oaths, "Wallah, this was true, by the life of thy beard!" After we had finished our meal, a flock of pretty blue pigeons fluttered down to the place where we had sat, and proceeded to peck up the few grains of rice which lay there.

At mid-afternoon, as we were in the act of mounting our camels, there approached us a Sudanese, black but comely, who desired that our Bedouins would

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mount his wife as far as El Khurga for ten Egyptian piastres. The poor young woman, a mere girl, and like the man, nearly naked, was obviously soon to suffer the ordeal of maternity. The Bedouins, however (who are credited as a race with possessing the attribute of generosity), refused to mount her for less than a rîyâl and a half—three times the amount tendered by the Sudâni. Half the sum demanded would have been a fair amount, even had there been no special circumstances to suggest a reduction.

The truth is that the Arab's generosity is often the result of mere ostentation, or more frequently, of care for his own preservation. The Arab, a Semite as is the Jew, is essentially a grasper—one who takes but does not give. He must entertain the guest, and protect the fugitive from blood-vengeance; for, if he failed to do so, then he himself could not expect hospitality and protection in the day of his own need. This is the poor origin and psychology of the Arab's generosity; but, growing out of it, has come a spirit which in many instances has led to deeds of quite quixotic heroism. Only, much depends upon the way in which an appeal to their honour is made. A bloody-handed murderer of their own race would know far better how to arouse their generosity than would a stranger, however deserving.

The Sudanese, who knew only a few words of Arabic, unsuccessfully tried to move the callous indifference of the Bedouins—holding out his poor coin with a pleasant face, while the girl stood meekly by. I thought I had never seen anything so moving as this black girl, standing, with a half-shy half-wondering smile on her child-like face, watching her husband converse with the Bedouins in a strange tongue. At

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last, one who observed the scene sternly bade the Bedouins to fear God and remember the poor girl's state, and to mount her for twenty piastres, and he would pay the difference. This, Khâlid finally agreed to do, his scowls suddenly turning to an amiable expression as he couched one of the camels and helped to arrange the saddle for the girl to ride on.

As we moved off, I observed numbers of poor African pilgrims marching by the side of the track on their feet—men, women, and children, stepping out with the simple unconsciousness of those who perform something inevitable, along the sun-scorched way to Mekka. The men for the most part wore nothing but a waist-cloth, and an amulet or two hung about the neck or attached to the arm. The women wore a piece of calico, unbleached and dirty, wound round the waist and extending to the knees. Another piece of the same material was wrapped about the breasts, passing over one shoulder; though some of them wore a sort of long shirt or smock. They carried their babies on the hip or the back—the infant being supported by the piece of calico which was passed around it. The children went naked as worms. These poor people had gourds and tin cans in which to carry their food and water, and the men for the most part carried thin spears some five feet in length. They almost invariably tramp every yard of the land journey on their feet, being too poor to hire camels.

I have been told by Africans from the Southern Sudan settled in Mekka, that many of their race occupy two years and even longer on the journey to the Holy City. Most of them take their wives and children with them, and babies are frequently born to the poor women during the journey.

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The camel track now wound between towering rock pinnacles and other smaller outcroppings of stone, until, at sunset, we found we had left the maze of stones behind us and were again in a wide sandy plain. At one point we passed a dozen little mounds by the way-side, each of which was surmounted by two rough pieces of stone. This was a desert graveyard. Another hour of travelling brought us among low sand dunes, and we continued to travel through these until we arrived, just before dawn, at a place called Umm el Khayr, where we camped.

Umm el Khayr is a slight depression in the undulating plain. There was a well of excellent water here, and round about it the ground was green with camel grass.

As I and the two camel-drivers were making tea, another caravan came into the depression and proceeded to encamp. Presently, just as I was making myself comfortable in order to sleep, a Bedouin from this caravan came across to us, and giving us the usual salutation "es-salâm 'alaykum," asked me if I knew the "language of Java." It appeared that he had a Malay travelling with him, who had fallen from his camel on his head during the night, and had become torpid in consequence.

Although the Malays never go on pilgrimage unless they have sufficient money for the purpose, they often suffer great hardship by reason of their inability to cope with the deceit and greed of the Arabs. The climate, too, which is so different from their own, frequently takes great toll of their numbers. It says a great deal for the religious faith of this gentle-mannered race of lazy children that so many of them save money for years in order to have the means to brave the terrors and discomforts of the Mekka pilgrimage.

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I went with the Bedouin to look at his Malay, whom I found lying under a blanket, in the scanty shade of a thorn bush. Uncovering his head, I saw the lined brown face of a middle-aged Malay. As I spoke to him in his own tongue, he opened his eyes and endeavoured to answer me. Learning that he had not broken his fast, I sent the Bedouin to fetch a water-melon which I had in my baggage. Having fed the Malay with some of this, I found him revive somewhat. He told me that, nodding half asleep on his camel in the night, he had fallen to the ground which, fortunately for him, happened to be of loose sand. I gathered from his starved and forlorn appearance that his present torpor was chiefly due to under-nourishment and lack of amusement. As a remedy for the latter ailment I set him to cook some rice for our joint dinner, feeling that that occupation would amuse him far more than it could possibly amuse me; and while he thus disported himself, I slept the peaceful sleep of one who has found a cure for one of life's most irksome duties. Later, as we sat round the great tin dish with the Bedouins, clawing up fistfuls of rice and samn, the Malay told me something of his past. It appeared that he had been the happy possessor of a small pepper plantation near Telok Betong in Southern Sumatra. Then his wife and two children had died, and our friend had "become mad," to use his own phrase. Eventually he had decided to perform the pilgrimage, which brings health to the Muslim soul as a trip to a watering-place brings physical health to the European. Taking ship from Batavia, he had landed at Madras—not for any particular reason, but merely because the ship went there. Crossing India in course of time, from Madras to Bombay, he had sailed from the latter port, in a dhow,

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to Makalla in Hadhramaut. Travelling partly by land and partly by sea, he had come along the coast, touching at Aden, Mokha, El Hodayda and El Lîth; and now, although not yet arrived in Mekka, he commenced eagerly to question me as to the relative positions of El Medîna, El Mesjid el Aksâ (Jerusalem), and Khalîl er-Rahmân (Hebron), and the means of reaching those places. He wrote down my answers in a small notebook, which he took from the pocket of an old drill jacket which he wore above his sarong. (The sarong is a skirt-like garment reaching from waist to ankle. It is peculiar to the inhabitants of the East Indies.)

Having finished eating, he took from his pocket a string of beads, and commenced to mutter repeatedly some short invocation, though I could not catch the whispered words. Presently he wrote something in his notebook, and then went on muttering. I asked to see the notebook, and found it half filled with figures. The explanation was that Abdul Hamîd, for such was his name, in order to improve his chances of reaching Paradise, had vowed to repeat the chapter of the Korân entitled *Sincerity* 777,777 times before he reached Mekka. Whenever he completed an even hundred of repetitions, he made a note of the achievement in his book. The total of his figures was added up at the bottom of each page, and I noticed with a shock of regret that Abdul Hamîd would soon reach the end of his great work—the poor soul had only another couple of thousand repetitions left him before completing his vow. He had no idea of the meaning of the words which he uttered, but in spite of that he appeared to entertain so great a faith in the soul-saving value of his exercise that I decided to put him up

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another thousand. I informed him that the Prophet's cousin, Ibn 'Abbās, tells us, on the authority of the Prophet himself, that the Muslim who repeats Chapter *Sincerity* one thousand times on Mount 'Arafa on the day of the pilgrimage, will be granted whatsoever he asks of God, however many and great his sins may have been. This pleased Abdul Hamīd exceedingly, and he made a badly spelt note of it in his little book. He said he hoped to die and be buried in Mekka, which would ensure his entry into the Garden in any case, but he was glad to have a second means of attaining to that glorious end in case the first means should not be granted to him.

That simple soul could see Paradise before him—a beautiful material Paradise, to be reached by deeds of the material flesh. There it was: just up there in the sky somewhere. He could not see it, but he knew it was there. A place where work was unknown, and soft and sensuous play filled all existence. Repeat, repeat the task and earn good marks! And no harm in writing down the score in a notebook of your own, so as to know how you stand.

What presumption! What touching pathos! What magnificent completeness of simple faith! To win your way to very Paradise by the frequent repetition of words whose meaning you do not understand, and to write down in a penny notebook the proof of your eligibility!

Chapter *Sincerity* is a fine declaration of the Unity of God:—

“In the Name of God, the Very Merciful: the Merciful.

“Say—He is God—One. God the Everlasting.

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“He begetteth not; neither is He begotten. And He has no equal.”

At mid-afternoon we loaded and moved off. Our way now lay across an undulating plain, the hollows of which were still green with the tender herbage of the spring grass. Occasionally outcroppings of granite, and sometimes of schist, appeared in the sandy ground. Away to the eastward were visible the heights of Jebel Kura. At sunset the fickle Bedouins decided to camp for the night, because “they were hungry and wanted to eat something cooked.”

We slept comfortably that night—the Malay and myself—on the slope of a low hill, and we did not remove until the following noon—because the Arabs felt tired.

Having started at midday, we marched for a couple of hours across the plain, and then entered a narrow pass between low rocky hills. We now came to an appalling country. Beneath the feet of our beasts the ground was strewn with black stones of all shapes and sizes. These stones looked as though, lying in the burning sunlight, they had become blackened by the heat of the centuries. On our right rose hills of the same deadly blackness, in height ranging between two hundred and six hundred feet. These, in their shapeless ugliness, appeared like uncouth masses and piles of dead cinders lying in that ghastly place; while the ash-grey sand which covered the ground at their bases served to heighten their appearance of great burnt-out fire-heaps.

The sun, flaming down into the stifling pits which we traversed between these hills, seemed to drain the very life from my body, so that I found it difficult to

TO EL LITH AND WĀDI YELAMLAM

keep upright on my camel. I frequently damped a kefiya or kerchief with water from my girba, and tied this about my head. The Bedouins mounted two of the camels, and lay along their backs in torpid indolence. The Sudanese girl sat her camel uncomplainingly, her head and shoulders covered with a piece of unbleached calico. Her husband and another black man picked their way painfully among the stones, at the rear of the string of camels. The Malay lay curled up looking like a sack of merchandise on his jerking beast.

As the sun sank westward, it assumed the appearance of burnished copper, ringed about with a fiery halo. Before me, I could see a gap between the stony hills, whose perpendicular sides descended to a wādi-bed of smooth sand. The sun was slowly sinking, but still its vicious heat caused a drougthy faintness in the body, while the stagnant atmosphere seemed to obstruct rather than assist the act of breathing. I leant forward on my camel, tensely waiting for the moment when the animal would put its slow foot into the shadow cast by the hills to our left front. It seemed as though we should never reach that blessed shade. The camels seemed still to pad for hours slowly forward, and yet all the while I could see the longed-for shadow lying across the rock-strewn ground ahead of us, and all the while that burning eye to westward glared mercilessly across the world.

At last the camel's fore-foot trod upon ground where no light was; but I myself, perched high upon the animal's back, was still in the red glare. It seemed minutes more before the heedless beast placed its other foot forward, and brought me at last into the sweet relief of the hill's shadow.

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A few minutes more, and the camels had descended into the wâdi-bed. Then it seemed that at once the whole of existence was changed. A sweet cool breeze blew down the great hill-walled water-course—playing about our fevered bodies like angel hands. Before us, in the wide bed of the wâdi, rose the stone parapet of a great circular well. Towards this we hastened, the camels moaning feebly and straining their necks.

This was the well El Khurga in the Wâdi Yelamlam. It is one of the stations at which travellers to Mekka assume the ihrâm—the dress of one who enters the Sacred Place.

VIII

WÂDI YELAMLAM TO MEKKA

AT El Khurga the Wâdi Yelamlam is two hundred and fifty yards in width. It is floored with coarse grey sand. For the distance of a mile and a half it runs in the direction north-east to south-west, and on its north-western side the hills form a nearly perpendicular wall of rock. Its south-eastern bank at this point is a gradually ascending slope of yellow sand, rising from the wâdi bed; and far beyond this slope to the eastward is a towering mass of rock, apparently limestone, which was coloured a golden pink when I saw it in the setting sun. It appeared to be four or five thousand feet in height. The Bedouins named it Jebel Yelamlam, and informed me that the wâdi, sweeping to the eastward—as I afterwards saw—at a point a mile and a half north-east of El Khurga, winds away in a south-easterly direction under the base of this great mountain.

The wall of rock which overhangs the wâdi on its north-western side terminates sharply some half a mile below El Khurga, and from that point the wâdi flows out over the level plain to the Red Sea.

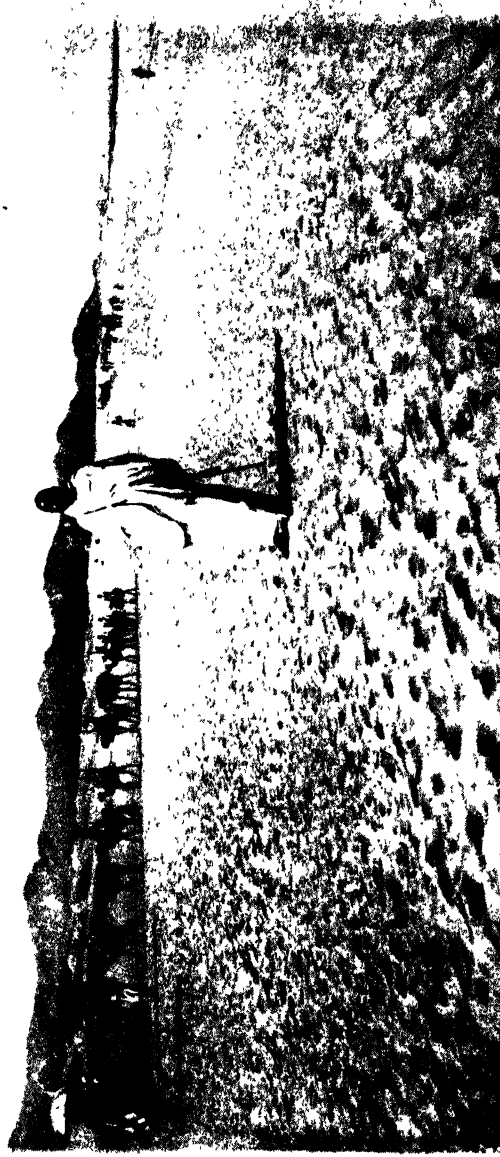
The well El Khurga is a beautifully constructed circular shaft, fourteen feet in diameter inside the orifice. It is lined with great stone blocks, nearly three feet in thickness at the top. The parapet rises three and a half feet above the bed of the wâdi, and several stone steps lead up to its top. Upon it the Arabs stand in order to let down their leathern buckets. At the time

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of my visit the water was thirty feet below the ground level. It was by far the best water I had tasted since leaving Egypt: being clearer than unfiltered Nile water, and as sweet.

Arrived at the well, we dismounted and drank copiously. I then took from my saddle-bags my *ihrâm*, which consisted of two large Turkish towels without any seam in them. It matters not of what material the *ihrâm* consists, so long as it is not of silk, which latter is unlawful at all times. The *ihrâm* may be of any colour, but white is preferred, and there must be no seam in either of the two garments, or pieces of material, which compose it. The pilgrim must leave his head bare, though a sunshade or the hands may be used to shield it from the rays of the sun. The instep of the foot must be left uncovered, and in order to conform to this stipulation sandals are usually worn.

The Malay, Abdul Hamîd, being ignorant of the procedure, brought his *ihrâm* to the place where I had put my baggage, and prepared to imitate my actions. Having stripped off our clothes, we performed total ablution by pouring water over ourselves, and after drying we donned the *ihrâm*—one piece of material (the “*izâr*”) being secured round the waist and extending to the ankles, the other (the “*ridâ*”) being thrown over the shoulders. As the *ihrâm* is about to be assumed the “intention” is repeated, either aloud or mentally. This may be expressed in some such words as “I have ‘*ihrâmed*’ for the Hajj as an act of duty to Almighty God.” The *nâwi*, or purposer, stands facing towards Mekka. After this we prayed a prayer of two prostrations, called “the *sunna*,” or religious custom, of *ihrâm*. The *sunna* in any connection is the Prophet’s example, which became law and remains so—being



PILGRIMS APPROACHING MEKKA, WEARING THE IHRAM

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WĀDĪ YELAMLAM TO MEKKA

only less absolute than the precepts contained in the Korân itself. We next repeated the "intention" of performing the Hajj—"I have purposed the Hajj and assumed the ihrâm for it, in conformity to God's command. Accept it of me, and make it blessed unto me, O Lord of the Worlds!"

After this we said the "talbiya," which we repeated at intervals from now onwards until we stood before the Kaaba in the Haram of Mekka. The "talbiya" in transliterated Arabic is as follows:—

"Labbayk, Allahumma, Labbayk!

"Labbayk, lâ sharîka laka, Labbayk!

"Inna'l hamda wa-n-ni'amata laka wa-l mulk.

"Lâ sharîka laka, Labbayk!"

This may be interpreted:—

"Here am I, O God, at Thy command!

"Here am I. Thou hast no partner. Here am I!

"Verily praise and grace and kingship are Thine.

"Thou hast no partner. Here am I!"

After this follows the supplication for blessings on the Prophet, together with other supplications which need not here be mentioned.

To an European, who has all his life been fully clothed, the ihrâm is the most comfortless form of dress conceivable, and its use, continued for a period of days, almost amounts to torture. It is absolutely obligatory for a Muslim to wear it in order to perform the rites of the Hajj or the 'Omra (the lesser pilgrimage). The idea that a Muhammedan may conscientiously enter Mekka in his ordinary clothes by sacrificing a sheep as alms is incorrect. Only in the event of his being ill could he do that, and in that case he would not be able to perform either the Hajj or the 'Omra,

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but would be obliged to assume the *ihrâm* before he could accomplish either.

The territory surrounding Mekka for some distance is sacred. In it no fighting may take place; no living thing be killed, save animals for food, or vermin; no plant be cut down. The extent of this sacred ground varies in different directions, but it extends to an average distance of twenty miles or so from the centre of the city. At some distance before entering the sacred limits, the Muslim assumes the *ihrâm*, and several stations have been appointed on the main roads for this purpose. They are called "*el mîkât el makâni*," and are as follow:—

1. Du-l Halîfa (or Abyâr Ali), one camel march south of El Medina.

2. Râbigh, on the sea-coast north of Jidda, for hâjjis coming down the Red Sea from Egypt. They put on the *ihrâm* when their ships are abreast of this place.

3. Yelamlam, on the Yemen road, two camel stages from Mekka. (This station, which is also called El Khurga, I have just described.)

4. Carn, on the Seyl road to Nejd, two stages east of Mekka.

5. Dât 'Irg, on the Darb esh-Shargi,* two stages north-east of Mekka.

6. Wâdi Muhrim, in a valley behind Jebel Kura, between Mekka and Et-Tâif.

At the moment when the pilgrim assumes the *ihrâm* he is obliged to regulate his life anew to some extent. Many little matters which may have been his daily habits must now be relinquished, until he is able to discard the *ihrâm*. Below is given a list of acts which

* The Darb esh-Shargi is the easternmost of the three caravan roads which connect Mekka and El Medina.

WĀDĪ YELAMLAM TO MEKKA

are unlawful to one wearing the ihrâm, together with the penalties incurred by committing them.

It is unlawful for a muhrim (i.e. a wearer of the ihrâm) to wear any garment which has a seam in it; to cover his head; to cut his hair or his nails; or to shave. The penalty for infringement of this rule is that the offender shall slay a sheep, and distribute the flesh to the poor as an alms.

The Muhammadan jurists, who enter into the most absurdly minute details when laying down the law, affirm that in the event of a muhrim cutting off no more than twelve of his hairs, a handful of wheat is a sufficient alms for him to distribute in order to atone for that misdemeanour. Similarly, the penalty for cutting only one or two of his nails is a bushel of wheat, instead of a sheep.

It is unlawful for a muhrim to use scent on his body, clothes, or bed; or in his food, drink, snuff or ointment. Infringement of this rule is atoned for by the sacrifice of a sheep.

It is unlawful for him to hunt, kill, drive roughly away, or scare, any animal save dangerous creatures. He may not cut grass, nor tree, nor plant, within the Haram limits. The penalty for infringement is a sheep.

He may not perform the sexual act. There is no atonement for this. It renders his pilgrimage null and void, and he must commence it all over again. If it were too late for him to assume the ihrâm anew, he would perforce have to wait until the following year, or a later year.

The penalties are paid at Mina during the pilgrimage, upon the return of the hâjjis from 'Arafa.

We remained two hours at El Khurga and then, having eaten and rested somewhat, we moved off

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again. Now it was that I performed the most uncomfortable thirty-six hours of travelling that I have ever experienced. I found it impossible to keep warm at night in the *ihrâm*; and, in addition to this, the ropes and the pommel of the jerking saddle rubbed the skin off my legs.

We marched up the *wâdi* in a north-easterly direction for over half an hour, and then, leaving it at the point where it turned eastward, we took to the open desert, which was of loose yellow sand with occasional small detached hills of rock. Camel grass and thorn bushes grew sparsely by the way. After marching all through the night, we camped soon after sunrise in a desolate depression, encircled by low stony hills which shut out every breath of wind. Here we sat or lay throughout the live-long blazing day—half entranced by the shimmering light which poured down upon the arid terrible world. The Malay told his beads with sightless fatalistic gaze. The camel-drivers slept on their bellies beneath a thorn bush—careless of heat or cold, hunger or repletion, night or day—sleeping away some of the hours which separated them from Paradise. The camels chawed at their cuds as they lay with folded legs among the hot stones. The Malay marked his score in his notebook, and lay down to sleep.

Oppressed by the hot silence, I rose up, and slowly picking my way across the stony depression, I mounted to the crest of a little hill. I found a hot breeze blowing, but it was fresher here than down in the dip, and I stood for some moments breathing in the air. Presently I heard a voice behind me, and turning to see who it was, I found Khâlîd coming towards me.

“Do not go far away, O Ahmad!” said he kindly. “There are many robbers in the hills about here.”

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His sharp, half-shut eye must have watched my movements, and feeling himself responsible for my safety, he had followed me. I had liked this youth from the first, for his readiness to fetch water and kindle fires, and for his cheery amiability. Yet the next night, in Mekka, he parted from me with a stony face and a brief word of farewell, as their custom is, and I never saw him again.

The following day soon after sunrise, we loaded the camels and started again. Chains of low rocky hills now began to appear in all directions, winding over the sandy scrub-covered desert. To the eastward, the peaks of Jebel Kura rose high into the cloudless sky. We marched all through that day, and at sunset we entered a narrow valley called El 'Ugushîya. As darkness fell we continued to thread our silent way among hills of barren rock, which assumed a sinister indefiniteness of form as they gradually merged in the blackness of the moonless night. Low above their crests the stars hung and glittered like jewels.

Onward we travelled, ceaselessly, in the chill night air.

At sunset I had asked Khâlid at what hour we should reach Mekka, and his reply had been "after two hours, in shâ Allah." Now it was past midnight, and still we padded on through the winding sandy valley, which was walled on either hand with grim black hills. Occasionally the Malay would cry "Labbayk, Allahumma, Labbayk!" in diminuendo. Khâlid would bray or warble an unintelligible song of the desert. Still we moved onward in the silent night, seeing nothing but the imminent stars, the indefinite overhanging blackness of the hills, the faint glimmer of the yellow sand beneath us. The dark world seemed un-

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real. The Arabs, I thought, must have lost their way. There could not be a great city a few miles ahead of us, in the midst of this deserted desolation. And then, as still we moved onward, unhurriedly but inevitably, the dim sand beneath us seemed to merge in shallow water. I could have sworn that our beasts were pacing through it, while right up to the bases of the black hills the faintly luminous surface of the water extended. Yet the only sound I heard was the "sish, sish" of the camels' padded feet in the sand.

Suddenly a light appeared ahead of us, and at the same moment came the sound of flowing water—pouring down in a heavy stream, as over a waterfall. This sound added to the illusion of the water-flooded valley. But, jumping down now from the back of my camel, I found myself on dry sand. I think the effect of water must have been caused by a slight clinging ground mist.

Continuing on our way, we passed the light, and I saw that it came from a lantern standing on a pillar outside a stone hut, which was evidently a coffee-house. Soon afterwards we came abreast of a well, from which water was being raised by two donkeys harnessed to ropes, which, passing over pulleys attached to a framework above the well, were tied to trough-like leathern buckets which emptied themselves over the parapet of the well into a gutter or aqueduct. About this well stood the dim forms of ithl trees, and a few date palms. We were passing through the narrow valley called Wâdi Et-Tarafayn.

Presently we went by a ruined stone house, and then past a wall, followed by rush fences, which bordered the stony track.

I remounted my camel, and sat looking eagerly

WÂDI YELAMLAM TO MEKKA

about me as the animal moved onwards. Another light appeared ahead of us, and then the tall forms of shuttered houses—one of a ghostly whiteness, others dark and vague in the gloom—became detached from the darkness which had obscured them. Then in front of us appeared the figure of a man, seated upon a kursî, and dressed in Bedouin clothes. A rough wooden table stood in front of him, and upon this rested the lantern whose light we had seen. The camel-drivers exchanged salutations with this man as we approached the place where he sat.

“Whence?” asked the Arab briefly.

“From El Lîth,” replied Khâlid.

“How many camels?” asked the other.

“Six,” replied Khâlid.

And thus, without stopping, we passed into the street called Zugâg Abi Bakr es-Sidîg in the quarter known as Hârat el Misfala.

I was in Mekka.

IX

PRELIMINARY RITES OF THE PILGRIMAGE

DRESSED in the ihrâm, I was shivering with cold: I was half starved and unwashed: I had had very little rest for more than a fortnight . . . but I was filled with a vehement thankfulness as I realised that I was in Mekka at last. Discomfort was forgotten as my camel carried me down the tortuous lane; into the heart of the old Arab city.

The little squat white dome of Hamza's mosque glimmered in the starlight as I passed it on my right hand. The dark branches of a sidr tree overhung a wall to the left. We passed beneath the arch formed by a house which was partly built over the unpaved street. To right and left narrow crooked lanes led away into the silent gloom. The stars shone above the flat house-tops. The uneven dusty lane undulated up and down.

The way we were traversing led into the market street called Sûk es-Saghîr. Presently we turned into the latter, and Khâlid and his companion, stopping their camels, called upon me to dismount, for we were close to Bâb el 'Omra, where was situated the house which I sought. Khâlid then unloaded my saddle-bags, and without another word, the two camel-drivers hit their animals and passed on down the silent street, and the darkness closed behind them. The Malay went with them, as he would dismount further on in the quarter called El Gashâshîya. Khâlid had promised to accompany me to the house of Abdurrahmân the

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mutawwif, but the fickle spirit of an Arab may hardly be bound by a promise, and I let him go.

Here was I, dressed in nothing but two towels and a pair of sandals, standing, an hour before dawn, in the main street of Mekka, unknown to, and not knowing, a single soul in the city.

Looking about me, I saw several Mekkans sleeping on kursîs which stood in the street before the shuttered shops. Approaching one of these sleepers, I awoke him by shouting the words "O Muhammad!" into his ear. He quickly woke, and learning that I was a hâjji—"We sow no corn nor durra," say the Mekkans; "the hâjjis are our crops"—he picked up my saddle-bags, and proceeded to lead the way to the house of Abdurrahmân. He called up, in the name of Abdurrahmân, the occupants of several houses, who were in no wise offended by his mistake, but rather did their best to direct us; before finally, entering a little dark passageway near the Bâb el 'Omra gate of the Great Mosque, we heard ourselves answered in the affirmative from the roof of a tall house.

A moment later, one leaf of the heavy double door of the house was thrown open, and on the threshold stood a rather tall full-figured man, dressed in sleeping attire of cotton shirt and drawers. I greeted him with the usual salutation, and having shaken hands, I handed him the note which Shafîg had given me at El Lîth. Then, holding up his little tin lamp, he turned and led the way upstairs. The stairs wound in fours up a narrow square shaft, which reminded me of subterranean dungeons. Opening a door, he led us into a room on the third floor, which measured some fifteen feet by twelve, and whose furniture consisted of carpets and cushions only.

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I gave the porter his hire, and he sat down comfortably as though at home, while Abdurrahmân went out to prepare me a cup of coffee. Soon my host returned with three finjâns of coffee, and as we drank he fell to enquiring after my health many times.

"The dawn is near," said he. "As soon as the adân (call to prayer) sounds we will go to the Haram, and after performing the towâf and the saaya you can breakfast and sleep."

He threw up two of the shutters of the unglazed windows; and as we sat on the cushions looking out on the flat starlit roofs of neighbouring houses and the black crests of the hills beyond, there suddenly rose on the air a long-drawn quavering cry—piercing the silence which hung over the sleeping city. The cry was immediately repeated by a number of other voices, which rose and fell and rose again, till the dark blue gloom of the night seemed to be all a-ring with the swelling sounds: "Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar! Ash-hadu ann lâ ilâha ill Allah"

It was the call to prayer, ringing out in a magnificent volume of sound from the Haram's seven spires in the silence of earliest dawn.

"Let us go down, O Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân.

I rose and followed him out to a little closet where I performed ablution, and then we descended the stairs. The porter had preceded us. Passing out of the house, we turned to the left and entered a tunnel-like passage running beneath some houses which adjoin the wall of the Great Mosque. Turning again to the left, after proceeding some six or seven paces, we found ourselves at the head of a flight of stone steps, which led down to a small doorway giving access to the Haram. This



THE CLOISTERS OF THE GREAT MOSQUE AT MEKKA

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PRELIMINARY RITES

little doorway, which was only large enough to permit the passage of one person at a time, was situated in the south-western wall of the mosque, between the gates called Bâb el 'Omra and Bâb Ibrâhîm.

Saying "bismillah," we stepped across the raised stone threshold, and I stood at last in the Haram of Mekka. Before me, running parallel with the wall, four rows of stone pillars extended to left and right. These pillars were some twenty feet in height, and the majority of them were cylindrical; while others were square or octagonal. They carried pointed arches, supporting a flat roof, which rose in small domes above the square formed by every four columns. From the apex of each little dome hung a long chain, to the end of which was attached a spherical clear-glass bowl. These bowls were ten inches in diameter, and the orifice at the top was about half that measurement. Within some of them smaller glass vessels, containing oil and lighted wicks, were placed. These were the lamps of the Haram. Beneath the arches the ground was paved with roughly-hewn blocks of granite.

Through the forest of columns, I could dimly see the great gravel-strewn quadrangle, over four and a half acres in extent; and in its midst, covered by a black cloth which made it hardly defined in the darkness, stood the Bayt Allah, the House of God—the Kaaba.

Under the arches of the cloisters, bare-footed, long-robed, silent figures were hurrying to take up their positions behind the imâms. In all parts of the great quadrangle, worshippers were forming into long lines facing the Kaaba, preparing to perform the morning prayer. Over the crest of the hill of Abi Cubays, the first faint light of dawn showed in the sky, like a transparent patch in a sheet of dark-blue glass.

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA

“Look!” said Abdurrahmân, “The Sacred House of God!”

I walked forward to the edge of the cloisters, and looked out across the wide court of the Mosque towards the great black-draped cube—that strange building, in the attempt to reach which tens of thousands, perhaps millions, of human beings have prematurely forfeited their lives; and seeing which, unnumbered millions have felt themselves to be on the very threshold of Paradise. It stood, with the simple massive grandeur of a solitary rock in the midst of the ocean—an expressive symbol of the Unity of that God Whose house it is. Aloof and mysterious it seemed, reared up majestically in the centre of the great open quadrangle: while round and round its base the panting hâjjis hurried eagerly, uttering their pitiful supplication—“O God! grant us, in the world, good; and, in the hereafter, good; and save us from the punishment of fire!”

Abdurrahmân now repeated the following supplication, which I said after him:

“O God, increase the honour and greatness and veneration of this House; and increase the honour and worthiness and righteousness of those performers of the Hajj and the ‘Omra who honour and magnify it. O God, Thou art peace; and from Thee is peace. Then cause us to live in peace, O Lord.”

Then, repeating “labbayk,” “Allah Akbar*!” “Lâ howla wa lâ gûwata illâ Billah il ‘Alî-l ‘Azîm” (there is no power and no strength but in God, The

* “Allah Akbar” means literally “God is Greater”; that is, Greater than anything else, and therefore Greatest of all.



PILGRIMS TOUCHING AND KISSING THE BLACK STONE
(At the corner of the Kaaba, to the left-hand side of the picture)

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PRELIMINARY RITES

High, The Tremendous), and other pious ejaculations, we walked across the Mosque; and passing through the arch called Bâb Bani Shayba towards the Kaaba, we took up our position at the end of a row of worshippers behind the Makâm El Hanafî, in order to pray the dawn prayer.

After the conclusion of prayers, we proceeded to perform the towâf el gudûm (the circumambulation of arrival). Advancing to the Kaaba, we passed round to its eastern corner, in which is set the Black Stone. Standing slightly to the left of the Stone, and facing the south-eastern wall of the House—but remaining several yards away from it, so as not to impede the progress of those already performing towâf—we raised our hands before our breasts with the palms upward, and repeated the “declaration of intention”—“I intend to encompass seven times unto Great God, as towâf of arrival. Allah Akbar!” Then, advancing among the stream of devotees, we edged our way towards the Black Stone, Abdurrahmân helping to make way for me. Rubbing the stone with my hands, I made a feint of kissing it, and passed on. In the event of the crowd being too great to allow of a person kissing or touching the stone, he may touch it with the end of a stick, and kiss the stick instead; or he may raise his hands into line with the sides of his face, with the palms towards the stone, and then lower them again, as a salutation. After this we proceeded to encircle the Kaaba, keeping it on our left hand. There are special invocations or supplications to be repeated as the worshipper passes along each side of the House. Let into the southern angle of the Kaaba, called “the Yemen Corner,” there is a second stone. Passing this, we stroked the right hand down it without stopping. Some of the more

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA

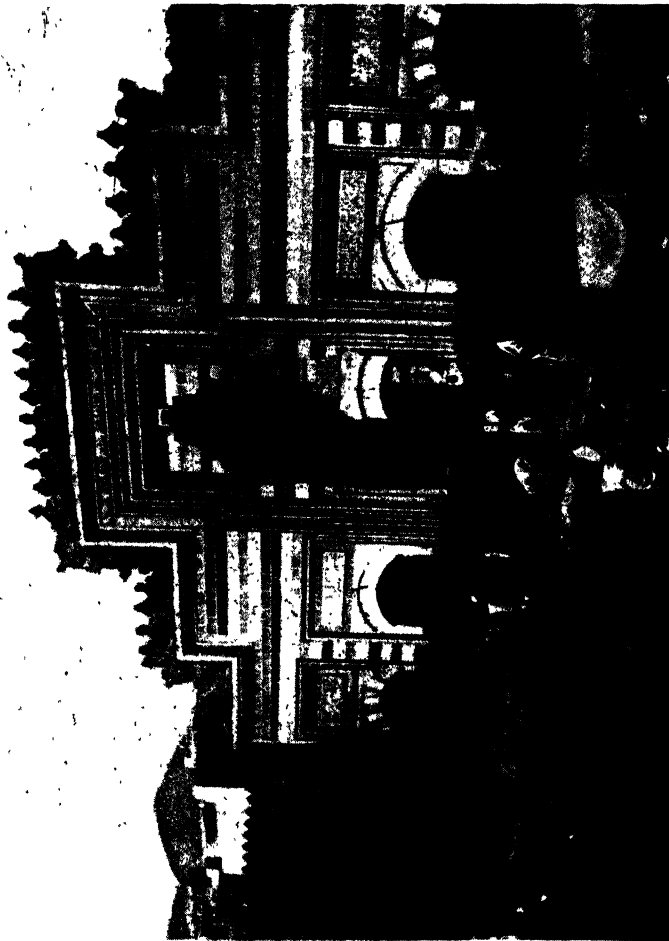
ignorant hâjjis kiss this stone, but such procedure is pronounced incorrect by the 'ulemâ.

Having completed a single course round the Bayt Allah, we now proceeded to repeat the performance six times, making seven circuits in all; the only difference between these and the first circuit being the omission of the nîya, or "intention." The first three circuits were performed at a very brisk pace, called "ramal"; and the last four at an ordinary walk. During the first three circuits, also, the "ridâ," or upper garment of the ihrâm, is passed beneath the right arm, and the ends folded over the left shoulder—leaving the right arm and shoulder bare. The person performing towâf should be as close to the Kaaba as possible, but in the event of there being a large crowd present, his towâf would be equally correct, however far he might be from the House, provided that he included no other object (such as the well Zemzem or the Makâm Ibrâhîm) within the circuit of his course.

The towâf, which was originally a custom of the pagan Arabs, is supposed to be a very important act of worship, done in imitation of the angels encompassing the Throne of God in Heaven.

Having completed our seven circuits, we proceeded to the rear of a little domed roof supported by iron pillars, called the Makâm Ibrâhîm. This stands opposite to the door of the Kaaba, at a distance of forty-five feet. Here we performed a prayer of two prostrations, as sunnat et-towâf (the "rule for towâf").

We then returned to the Kaaba, and again touched and kissed the Black Stone, saying "Allah Akbar!" three times. Next we stood at the Multazam, which is that part of the north-eastern wall of the Kaaba which stands between the door and the corner in which is the



THE GATE CALLED BAB ES-SABA

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Black Stone. Standing with our breasts close to the Multazam, and holding our arms outstretched against the black covering, we repeated a further formal supplication; after which the worshipper may make any private petition to God which he may desire.

Proceeding now to the well Zemzem—which is enclosed in a small building near the Makâm Ibrâhîm—I drank a draught of its warm and slightly brackish water; and having repeated the inevitable supplication, we walked to the south-eastern cloisters, and passed out of the Haram through the Bâb es-Safâ. Opposite this gate, there is a house belonging to some of the ash râf, and to the left of this a small lane leads into the street called El Masâ, or the “place of running.” The Masâ commences as a *cul-de-sac* a few yards up the slope of Jebel Abi Cubays, where several broad stone steps lead to a small paved platform which is surmounted by three stone arches. Mounting these steps with Abdurrahmân, I stood at the top, and turning towards the Kaaba (which was hidden from sight within the walls of the Haram) I repeated certain supplications after my guide, beginning as usual with the “intention.” Descending the steps, we proceeded at a smart walk along the Masâ, Abdurrahmân all the while saying the ritual, which I repeated after him. The Masâ passes round the south-eastern corner of the Haram; and built into the Mosque wall which overlooks it at this point is a stone pillar. A similar pillar is built into a house called Dâr el ‘Abbâs, on the opposite side of the way. These two stones are called El Maylayn el Akhdarayn, and are painted green. Arrived at about six paces from these pillars, the pilgrim breaks into a run, and upon coming abreast of them he again resumes his walking gait, all the while

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repeating prayers, until he reaches the further end of the Masâ, which is also a *cul-de-sac*, and is called El Marwa. This point is also in an elevated position, being situated on the lower slope of Jebel Laala. Here, there is another flight of broad steps, leading to a platform somewhat more raised than that of Es-Safâ. Arrived on the steps of El Marwa, we faced in the direction of the Kaaba and made supplication, as at Es-Safâ. This was repeated seven times—four journeys from Es-Safâ to El Marwa, and three return journeys.

The pagan Arabs are said to have set up idols on Es-Safâ and El Marwa, which circumstance is the pre-Islamic origin of the "running." The latter is also said to commemorate Hagar's running about the valley of Mekka in desperate search for water. The Islamic institution of the saaya has its immediate origin in the following passage from chapter *The Cow*:—

"Verily Es-Safâ and El Marwa are of the signs of God. Whoever, therefore, goes on pilgrimage to the House, or performs the 'Omra, there shall be no sin against him in the compassing of them" (i.e. the compassing of Es-Safâ and El Marwa).

This sounds optional, and looks as though there might be no sin against him if he did *not* compass them; but the saaya has become an absolutely obligatory part of the rites of the pilgrimage, whatever may have been the intention of the passage quoted.

The conclusion of the saaya found us at El Marwa, where several barbers' shops are situated conveniently for cutting the hair of pilgrims immediately after the completion of the "running," as the law ordains.

While the barber clipped a few hairs from my head, I observed the Masâ with interest. It is lined for more

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than half its length with little shops, and the part in which these shops are situated is roofed over. This roof extends from El Marwa to the Dâr El ‘Abbâs. The street, which is one of the principal markets of the city, was unpaved at the time of which I write. Since my departure from the Hijâz, however, I have heard that the Wakhhâbî Sultân has given orders that it is to be paved with stone. During my time in Mekka, it was always several inches deep in dust or mud, according to the season of the year. In dry weather, the crowds which constantly passed to and fro, shopping or performing the saaya, stirred up a thick fog of dust which made breathing extremely uncomfortable.

As I sat in the barber’s shop, bands of hâjjis were striding up and down the street with hasty steps. They were chiefly Arabs, but some Indians and Bokhârans were among them. Before each band marched a mutawwif. Some of these were bearded shaykhs, while others were mere youths. With their heads swathed in large yellow turbans; their waists girt with broad sashes of scarlet, of green, or of yellow; their gaudy jackets and fantastic sandals, they presented a dashing, even a gallant sight. Striding past with their heads held high, and throwing frequent quick vivid glances of their dark eyes over either shoulder, in order to see that the drove of bare-headed white-clad hâjjis heard and repeated their words, they intoned the ritual in a loud voice and with beautiful enunciation. Confident as kings they seemed, and, for all the youth of some of them, not unworthy to lead bearded men in the performance of the rites of their religion at the “Centre of the Universe.” Full-throated and sonorous were their voices, shaping out every syllable, and deliberately allowing the ends of the words to swell and die away

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like rousing notes of music. Many of them, however, mutilate their language when "guiding" non-Arabic-speaking pilgrims. This they do in order to make the repetition of the prayers more easy to the hâjjis.

The mutawwifs are entered to their business when very young. I have seen a small boy of perhaps nine years "guiding" a mob of Bokhârans. One of the brawny hâjjis carried the youngster round the Kaaba on his shoulder, while the little fellow boldly cried out the words of the ritual—the bearded hâjjis repeating them after him.

The hair-cutting over, I lost no time in returning with Abdurrahmân to the house, where I sat down with my guide to eat heartily of beans and samn, followed by a sort of pancake filled with pieces of banana.

The remaining ceremonies of the Hajj are performed on the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Du-l Hijja.

The ceremonies just described are performed by everybody who enters Mekka, unless, like the majority of the Bedouins, he happens to be heedless of the ritual of his religion. A person who has "intended" to perform the 'Omra may now discard the ihrâm, as he has completed that rite, but one who intends to perform the Hajj must continue in the ihrâm until the 10th day of Du-l Hijja.

X

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES ON MEKKA

ALONG the western coast of Arabia, from the Gulf of Akaba in the north to the strait called Bâb el Mandeb in the south, lies a narrow sandy plain varying in width between fifty miles and less than two. This plain is known as the Tihâma. Bordering the Tihâma, to the eastward, is a range of rocky mountains, and this range it is which marks the eastern limits of the plain.

Situated on the coast at, roughly, the half-way point between the Gulf of Akaba and the Strait of Bâb el Mandeb, lies the port of Jidda. Some twenty miles to the eastward of Jidda the lower spurs of the mountain range rise on the coastal plain; and hidden at the distance of a further twenty miles, among winding chains of barren mountains, its people cut off from free intercourse with the rest of the world by the sterile nature of its encircling deserts, lies Mekka. The Muhammedans believe that to enter this city is forbidden by God to all who do not believe in the tenets of the Islamic religion, that is to say, to upwards of four-fifths of mankind.

The valley of Mekka runs from north to south, and that part of it in which lies the main bulk of the city forms a sort of basin, half a mile wide throughout its length. The length of this part of the wâdi is some two miles—that is, from the northern extremity of what is

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now the cemetery El Maala to the southern end of El Misfala, by Jebel Umar. At the southern end of a mountain called Jebel Gaygaân, which lies on the western side of the valley, one branch of the wâdi turns at an acute angle in a north-westerly direction, while the main branch suddenly narrows to the width of a quarter of a mile, and continues southward.

The basin of Mekka, two miles long by half a mile broad, is inclosed by high wall-like hills of rock. The names of these hills are:—

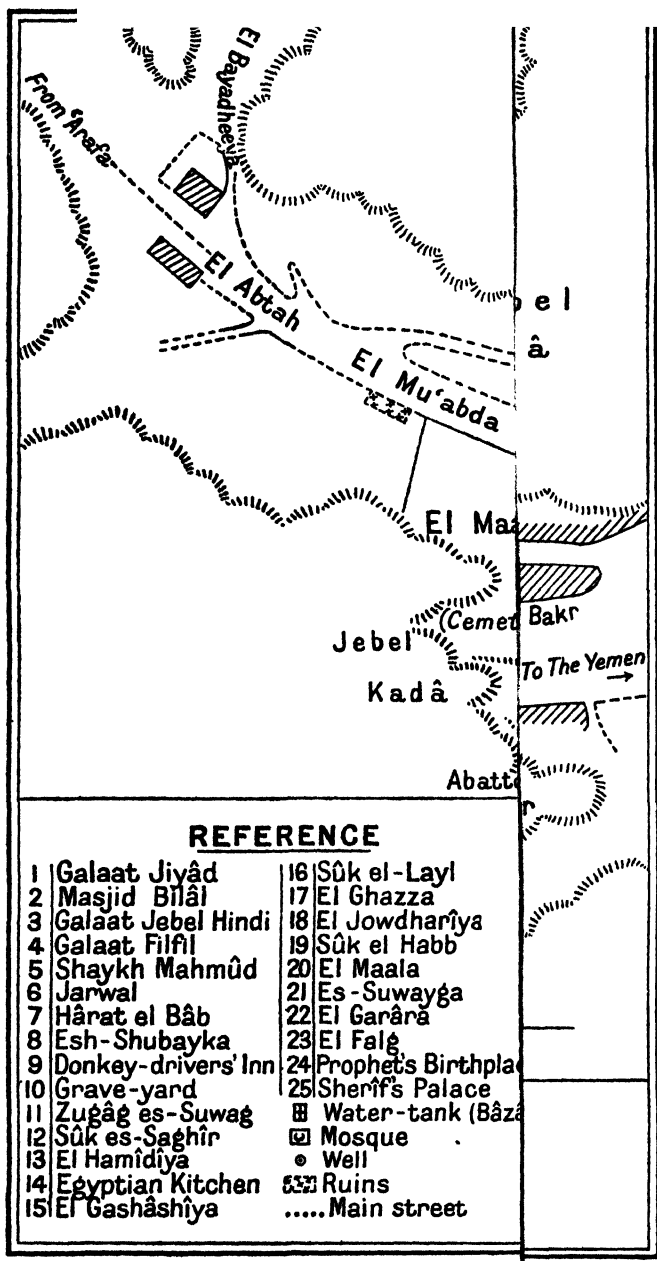
On the north—Jebel Kadâ (1,200 feet).* This mountain borders El Maala on its northern side. On the west—Jebel Laala (800 feet), Jebel Gaygaân (1,000 feet), and Jebel el Fanna (1,000 feet).

Between Jebel Kadâ and Jebel Laala is a small gap called El Hujûn, through which passes a track which joins the El Medîna road beyond Jerwal; and between Jebel Gaygaân and Jebel el Fanna is the gap through which passes the main street of the city—called, at this point, Hârat el Bâb.

On the east—Jebel Kudâ (800 feet), and Jebel Khandama (2,000 feet). Between these two mountains lies the ravine known as Shiab Jiyâd.

Into the centre of the basin which is inclosed by these mountains protrude four raised points which overlook the city, though they are themselves commanded by the higher mountains which rise behind them. These four points are:

* The heights and distances recorded in this chapter are not laid down as accurate information; they represent the results of rough calculation and guesswork. The figures of mountain altitudes represent the heights from the bottom of the valley of Mekka. Mekka itself is said, by Muhammad Pasha Sâdik, to be 930 feet above sea-level. Accordingly, it is necessary to add that figure to the heights given in this chapter in order to arrive at the altitudes of the mountain-crests above sea level.



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1. Jebel Jiyâd (600 feet), at the south-eastern extremity of the valley. On it is mounted a small but strongly constructed fortress, called Galaat Jiyâd, or simply El Galaa.

2. Jebel Abi Cubays (600 feet), which lies five hundred yards north of Jebel Jiyâd, and extends from the eastern mountain-wall into the very centre of the valley, where it overhangs the Haram. On its summit stands conspicuously a small whitened mosque, called Mesjid Bilâl.

3. Jebel Hindi (600 feet), on the western side of the valley, and facing Abi Cubays, but slightly to the northward of it. On its summit stands a two-storeyed barrack, which is dignified with the name of Fort Jebel Hindi. The Haram lies in the hollow of the wâdi-bed, directly between Abi Cubays and Jebel Hindi.

4. Jebel Filfil, or Jebel el Falg (400 feet), at a distance of five hundred yards to the N.N.E. of Jebel Hindi. It is surmounted by a small stone fort, at present in disrepair, called Galaat Filfil.

The valley of Mekka has three outlets. On the north is the ravine called El Muâbda which, bearing to the eastward, leads to 'Arafa, Et-Tâif, and Nejd. On the south is El Misfala, leading to the Wâdi Et-Tarafayn and the Yemen road; and on the south-west is Hârat el Bâb, leading to the Jidda and El Medîna roads.

According to Arab belief, this breathless pit enclosed by walls of rock knew the tread of a human foot at the very dawn of history. For the Arab historians assert that Adam, at the command of God, rebuilt here the Kaaba, which had already been built by the angels before the creation of man; but had, presumably,

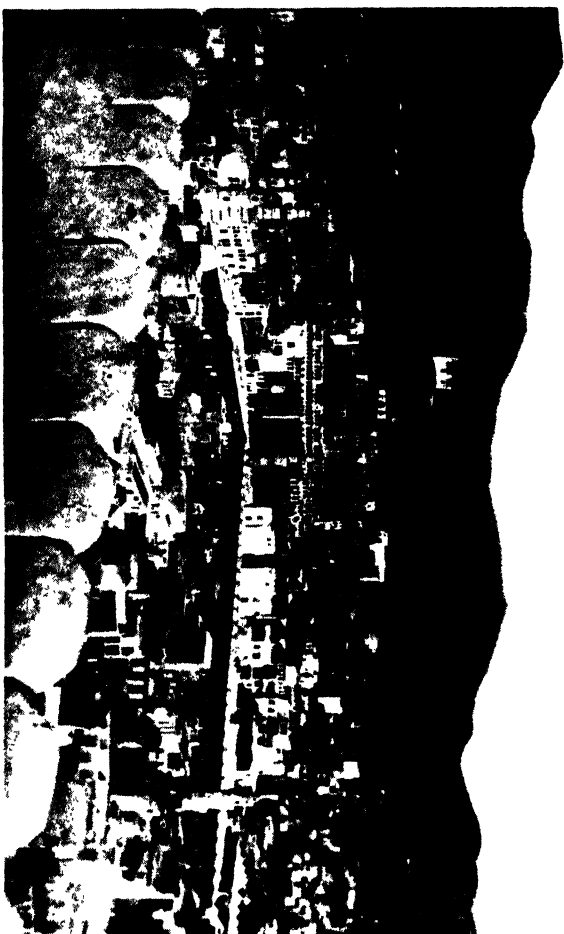
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fallen into ruin. Subsequently the Kaaba was rebuilt successively by the sons of Adam, by Abraham, by the Amalekites (who settled in this valley after the arrival of Hagar and Ismayl),* by Bani Jorham, by Kusay ibn Kilâb, and by the tribe of Curaysh, who were assisted in their building activities by a youth of twenty-five years named Muhammad ibn Abdulla, who, fifteen years later, was to assume his mission of prophecy, which changed the whole course of the world's history.

Leaving out of account the mythical tales of Mekka's origin, which the Arab historians have put forward as solid incontrovertible facts, we know from writings of the pre-Islamic Arabs that an idol-house, or temple, stood in the valley of Mekka long before the time of Muhammad. It was the custom of the pagan Arabs to journey on pilgrimage to this spot, where men and women performed the circuit of the Kaaba in a state of complete nudity. At the time of Muhammad's birth, there are said to have been three hundred and sixty† idols in the Kaaba, many of them being, doubtless, mere unsculptured stones. In addition to these, numbers of trees and rocks in the surrounding hills and deserts were worshipped. Christianity had made some progress in northern and eastern Arabia, and in the Yemen, and it is stated by one of the Arab historians, that a stone, sculptured in the likeness of the

* The Muslims believe that when Abraham, at the instance of Sarah, agreed to send Hagar away with Ismayl, he took her to the valley of Mekka, where she discovered the well Zemzem, and continued to dwell. They also believe that Abraham subsequently paid periodical visits to Mekka.

† This number is probably an extravagant Arabic figure of speech, meaning "a great many."



MEKKA LOOKING TOWARDS THE EAST

In the left hand distance is J. Khandama; to its right is J. Kuda. In the centre is the white Mosque of Bilal surmounting J. Abi Cubays. In the foreground is the Haram.

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Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus, was included in the Mekkan pantheon.

In the time of Kusay ibn Kilâb (fifth to sixth century A.D.) permanent dwelling-houses were first built in the valley of Mekka, though the majority of the dwellings remained houses or tents of hair-cloth. The Curaysh, after the death of Kusay, improved and enlarged the town, and continued to encourage the pagan pilgrimage.

In the year 570 A.D. Muhammad was born at Mekka. His parents having died during his infancy, he was adopted by his grandfather Abdul Muttalib ibn Hâshim, Chief of the Tribe of Curaysh, and consequently Prince of Mekka. On the death of his grandfather, Muhammad was taken charge of by his uncle, Abu Tâlib, who took him on a journey to Syria. At the age of twenty-five he married a wealthy widow of Mekka, named Khadîja, by whom he had been employed as agent in charge of caravans trading with Syria. At this time he held a very high place in the estimation of his fellows, being known as "The Truthful and Trusty."

In the year 610, being then forty years of age, Muhammad began to receive the revelations which compose the Korân. These revelations, which are supposed to have been inscribed upon "the Preserved Tablet" in Heaven since the beginning of time, were communicated by God to the Angel Gabriel, for transmission to Muhammad. In 622, the Prophet, relentlessly persecuted by the Curaysh who disbelieved in his mission, and with his life in danger, fled to El Medîna, whose inhabitants received him with kindness and accepted his teaching. From the year of this flight the Muslims date the commencement of their calendar—

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el hijra meaning "the flight." The number of Muhammad's adherents now increased rapidly, and in 8 A.H. (629 A.D.) he returned triumphantly to Mekka, where he destroyed the idols in the Kaaba and received the submission, or rather the conversion, of the majority of his former enemies.

In the year A.H. 9 the chapter entitled *Repentance* was revealed at El Medina. This chapter prohibits the entry of unbelievers into Mekka in these words:—"O, you who believe! Verily the polytheists are unclean. Therefore they shall not approach near to the Sacred Mosque after this year."

In A.H. 11 the Prophet died at El Medina.

Through the thirteen centuries since Muhammad's death, Mekka and El Medina have waxed and waned. There were years of conquest and glory, when the Arab armies in Syria, Egypt, and Irâk, sent home numerous caravans laden with costly spoils of war. While their spartan simplicity of living remained unaltered the Arabs were invincible. The Arab State was comparable to a desert tribe—the ruler lived as unassumingly and as simply as any of his subjects.

One day in A.H. 15, a messenger, mounted on a fleet camel, came speeding across the desert towards El Medina. He came from Saad ibn Abi Wagâs, in command of the army in Irâk. Urging his camel over the sandy plain on his way into the city, he was accosted by a shabbily dressed old man who was walking by the wayside.

"Whence come you?" asked the old man.

"From El Irâk," said the messenger without halting.

"Ha! and what is the news, thou servant of God?" asked the old man, stumbling along beside the quickly moving camel.

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"God has put the polytheists to rout," said the messenger, and, with the old man panting along on foot beneath him, he rode on into the city, telling him the news as he went.

Then, as they passed in at the gate, the people of the city who walked in the streets began to greet the old man with "Peace be upon you, O Commander of the Faithful!"

"God show you mercy," said the messenger, dismounting quickly. "Would you then not tell me that you are the Commander of the Faithful?"

"Nothing against you, O my brother," said the old man simply.

It was Umar ibn El Khattâb the Khalîfa, Ruler of Arabia, Syria, Irâk, and Egypt.

Those were heroic days for the Arabs, when an old grey-bearded man, clothed in ancient patched garments, walking bare-footed, and living in a mud-hovel, could send out camel-riders bearing messages to his victorious armies beyond the Euphrates, beyond the Jordan, beyond the Nile—messages containing commands which changed the course of history.

Years of prosperity followed for the inhabitants of the Holy Cities. Under the Umeyyad Khalîfas of Damascus, and the Abbasids of Bagdad, the Islamic State rose to great heights of wealth and power, and much money was lavished upon the Haramayn.

It is probable, however, that Mekka and El Medîna never attained to a greater height of prosperity than in the later years of the Turkish Empire—during the reign of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd. Abdul Hamîd was a wonderful exponent of the power of advertisement, and he saw to it that his public paid for his advertising. The Hijâz railway, from Damascus to El

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Medîna, was constructed with funds supplied by every country in the Islamic world. The printing presses of Constantinople worked at high pressure upon the printing of the Korân and books of prayers in many Muhammadan languages; and to this day, from Java to Morocco, it is a Muslim's pride to possess a Stam-bûli Korân. Pictures of the Holy Places, drawn with such startling perspective that they compelled attention, were strewn about the world, from Algeria to China, from Servia to Sumatra. All this activity aroused great enthusiasm among the Muslimîn, and was the means of enormously increasing the numbers of hâjjis at the annual pilgrimage, and also the numbers of the permanent population of the Holy Cities. There are now in Mekka, and still more noticeably in El Medîna, streets of houses which, as is obvious from the descriptions published by J. L. Burckhardt,* did not exist in the early part of last century. Since the fall of Imperial Turkey, the population of the Holy Cities has again shrunk, and many houses are in ruins.

The Islamic world never reposed any confidence in King Husayn. In spite of his white beard and his piety, he was never able to create that atmosphere of power which emanated from the aloof little schemer of Yildiz. El Husayn was the puppet of unbelievers; not their opponent and diplomatic equal.

Mekka has several times been almost deserted of inhabitants, and the pilgrimage has been completely stopped by wars, sometimes for several years. The Haram, whose very name means "sanctuary," has

* John Lewis Burckhardt, born at Lauzanne in 1784, travelled in the Hejâz in 1814-15. Died at Cairo in 1816: buried without the gate called Bâb en-Nasr. His "Travels in Arabia" was published in London in 1829.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

more than once been the scene of bloody strife. As late as 1916, when the Arabs joined the Allies, some of the Sherífan troops attacked, with rifle-fire, a party of Turks who took refuge in the Great Mosque.

XI

TOPOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF MEKKA

MEKKA, the largest town in the Peninsula of Arabia, although well built for an Eastern city, is far from being beautiful. It is a little old ugly Arab town, bare of ornament, but full of fascination. No splendid domes nor sultân's turrets throw magic charm of fret-work on its skies; yet millions of the Indian race, who delight in fantastic architecture, long for the sight of the unadorned Kaaba and the tortuous lanes which surround it. No sweet relief of greens hadowed garden breaks the sterility of its rock-bound confines; yet it is the bourn of the dearest earthly hopes of the dwellers in those floating gardens of enchantment, the islands of the East Indies.

The main street of Mekka may be said to commence at a place called Shaykh Mahmûd, which is situated in that narrow branch of the Mekka valley which turns out of the main wâdi at an acute angle round the base of Jebel Gaygaân. At this point the Jidda road branches westward, from the main road which leads on to the Wâdi Fâtma and El Medîna. Here there is a house with a small orchard enclosed by walls. This was used, in Turkish times, as an agricultural school. From this point the road, which averages twenty yards in width, proceeds south-eastward, and for more than half a mile of its length is known as Jarwal; the lanes leading out of it on either side being also called, collectively, Hârat Jarwal, or the Jarwal Quarter. Like all the

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streets of Mekka, those in this quarter are quite unpaved, and Jarwal itself is ankle-deep with loose grey sand. In this quarter dwell poor Bedouins and others, who are engaged in the business of the caravan traffic. They are chiefly of the Harb tribe, and many of them live in tents pitched in their stone-walled camel-yards; while some have rough stone huts. The street of Jarwal is lined with small shops—chiefly grain merchants', chandlers' and coffee-shops—and there are one or two good houses owned by the sharîfs. Beyond Jarwal, the road proceeds round the base of Jebel Gaygaân, in a gradual curve, until it points eastward. This part of the road is known as Hârat el Bâb, and contains a number of good three- and four-storeyed houses, many of them occupied by mutawwifs of the Indians. Beyond Hârat el Bâb, the street takes the name of Esh-Shubayka, and this quarter is well built and thickly populated. Along the main street at this point are many coffee-shops, together with numbers of other shops of all sorts—fruiterers', chandlers', grain-sellers', bakers', tin-smiths', and so on.

Sending out a narrow side-street, which passes beside the Haram in a north-easterly direction and joins the Masâ near El Marwa, the main street now turns abruptly to the right in a south-easterly direction, and leaving on its left the quarter called Hârat Bâb el 'Omra, passes down a steady incline through the narrow jewellers' street called Zugâg es-Suwag, into a wide market street known as Sûk es-Saghîr. At the top of Zûgag es-Suwag, where the road bifurcates, stands a coffee-house known as Gahwat el Hammâra, the Coffee-house of the Donkey-drivers, and here, within or without the hall of refreshment, according to the position of the sun, a number of fine donkeys are usually

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to be found awaiting hire. Esh-Shubayka is inhabited almost exclusively by mutawwifs, chiefly those of the Indians, Javans, Bokhârans and Afghans. On the right of Esh-Shubayka, and hidden from sight by the tall houses of that quarter, lies an old graveyard, which has been disused since the plague of A.H. 1326, when long trenches were dug in it to accommodate some of the thousands of bodies which encumbered the streets and houses of the city.

Sûk es-Saghîr is in the main valley of Mekka, and forms part of the wâdi or watercourse which runs through it. Mekka is probably the only capital, perhaps the only town of any size, in the world whose main street is a watercourse, which every year is several times in flood.

I walked down Zugâg es-Suwag on a dry day in the early part of 1926. The fine dust rose from under my feet as I walked, and the sun was shining as intensely as if it were searching for lurking unbelievers. As I reached the bottom of Zugâg es-Suwag, and was about to turn into Sûk es-Saghîr, I saw before me a swift-flowing river extending the whole breadth (twenty paces) of the market street, and washing against the foundations of the shops. The old city seemed to have taken on a new air of romance with the sudden advent of this swirling stream, flowing down the winding course of the Sûk es-Saghîr and the Misfala. Little stools, mats, reed fans, rags, and many other articles, were floating past on the flood, and small naked boys were wading delightedly in the middle of it, with the water nearly up to their waists. There had been no rain in Mekka for some days; the wâdi had had no water in it for weeks; and even now the sun was shining. Yet this great volume of water was pouring down

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from the upper end of the valley (El Maala), and flooding up round the walls of the Haram on its north-eastern and south-eastern sides.

The cause of the flood was a sudden rain-storm, which had burst somewhere on the ranges of Jebel Kura between Mekka and Et-Tâif, which district shelves down to the Wâdi El Yemânîya. This wâdi passes north of Mekka into the Wâdi Fâtma; but at a place called Bir Barûd, some five miles north-east of Mekka, a gap in the mountains allows the flood to overflow into the valley of Mekka. A dam, of roughly hewn stones fixed with cement, has been constructed across the gap, but it is inadequate to the purpose of completely obstructing the passage of the floods into Mekka.

Returning to Sûk es-Saghîr an hour after seeing the flood, I found the watercourse empty, and showing a deep irregular cleft down its centre, which had been cut by the rushing torrent.

Turning to the left down Sûk es-Saghîr, one proceeds in an easterly direction, passing on the way butchers', fruiterers', chandlers', grain-sellers', cotton-cloth sellers', lemonade sellers', and other shops, in great profusion. On the ground, which is rendered soft and comfortable by the deep dust which forms its surface, sit the sellers of halfpenny-worths. Usually their stalls consist of a wooden board placed upon a low stool, but frequently a piece of rush matting or sackcloth spread upon the ground is used. Here may be seen—though dimly, on account of the perpetual fog of dust—slices of mauled melon, battered prickly pears—"prickly figs" the Arabs call them—grimy bowls of sour milk, a mangled tomato or two, together with slabs of yesterday's bread—most of which viands

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have already done service in the shops behind before being acquired by the band of light skirmishers sitting in the dust. The latter now tempt the poor passer-by with artful hunger-inducing words, and the eternal cry "halalatayn" (two farthings).

The street narrows sharply as it approaches the southern corner of the Haram, and directly in front rises a fine gateway, with a semi-circular arch, which is approached by ascending several stone steps and immediately descending several more—the steps forming a dam which keeps the floods out of the Haram. This gate is called Bâb Ibrâhîm, not after the Jewish patriarch, but after a tailor who used to ply his trade near by. It is the main south-western gate of the Haram. Still moving eastward, one passes, on the left, a school (El Madressat el Fakhriya), and then a second gate of the Haram, called Bâb el Widâ, over which is carved an inscription in the Kufic character. Here the street bears to the right a little, in order to clear the southern corner of the Haram. It then becomes broader again, and skirts the south-eastern wall of the Mosque, in which are the gates Bâb Umm Hâni, Bâb 'Ajlân, Bâb Jiyâd, Bâb er-Rahma, Bâb es-Safâ, Bâb el Baghla, and Bâb Bâzân. On the right is the government building El Hamîdiya, the soup-kitchen maintained for the poor by the Egyptian Ministry of Wakfs, a fine house of the Sharîfs, the hill Es-Safâ, and the police headquarters. This part of the main road bears no name as a street, but the first part of it (in which stand the Hamîdiya and the Egyptian soup-kitchen) is counted as part of Hârat el Jiyâd, while the further end belongs to Hârat es-Safâ.

The road now crosses the Masâ, and then bears to the left until its direction is due north. It is here called

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El Gashâshîya, and in this quarter, which at present bears a somewhat dilapidated appearance, dwell the majority of the Malay and Javanese mutawwifs; or, as they are designated, the Shayks of the Javans. A few shops, the majority of which supply foodstuffs, are found at intervals along El Gashâshîya; and the principal boys' school of Mekka (Madressat el Falâh) is situated at the point where it joins El Masâ. At a distance of five hundred yards or so beyond this school, the name of the street changes to Sûk el-Layl, which quarter is crowded with coffee-shops and other establishments, including a large potter's shop containing all manner of unglazed earthenware jars, bowls, pots, and water-bottles. To the right lies the district known as Shiab Ali (Ali's Ravine), which is closely packed with mutawwifs' houses of four or five storeys. In this quarter is the Prophet's birthplace, called Mûlid en-Nabi, and here, too, the daily "harâj," or auction-mart of furniture and clothing, is held. Beyond Shiab Ali, on the right-hand side of the way, stands the great palace of the Amîrs of Mekka, built a hundred years ago by Muhammad Ali Pasha, Ruler of Egypt. Here the street takes the name El Ghazza.

Still proceeding northward: on the left is a new palace—well built with the fine dark grey granite of Mèkka. This dwelling was built by King Husayn, and is now occupied by Ibn Sa'ûd. On the opposite side of the way, but further along, a narrow lane leads into the quarter known as Shiab Aamir.

A few paces further on, the road converges upon, and joins, the market street known as El Jowdhariya, which, under the name of El Muddaâ for the greater part of its length, extends from the Masâ near El Marwa to this point. This street is sheltered by a

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wooden roof, save for the last three hundred yards, and it is the unroofed part which is called El Jowd-hariya.

The single street formed by the merging of El Jowdariya into El Ghazza is called El Maala. At the junction are situated the shops of the principal grain-sellers. There is an open space where the three roads meet, and here the grain caravans put down their loads. This place is sometimes termed Sûk el Habb (the Grain Market). The way is now bordered by a continuous double line of small shops, stocked with all sorts of foodstuffs and household requisites. There are also a number of blacksmiths' shops here. It is called Sûk el Maala. On the left-hand side of the way, immediately before we reach the graveyard of El Maala, is a large open space, about a hundred yards square. This is called El Halaga, and is the venue of the wholesale fruit, vegetable, firewood, and charcoal market. Here, before sunrise each morning, the caravans from Et-Tâif, Wâdi Lîmûn, Wâdi Fâtma, and El Husayniya, deposit their loads; and the open space is crowded with would-be buyers, gesticulating, shouting, cursing, praying, tasting fruits, breaking sticks of firewood to ascertain whether it is dry, or trying the weight of bags of charcoal.

At the northern end of this market-place, which is surrounded by houses, the city may be said to terminate. Beyond this point, the road widens out to a breadth of thirty yards, and on the right-hand side extends a row of the poorest sort of shops and coffee-houses. Here the donkey market is held, but only the most wretched, under-sized, or superannuated animals ever reach it. Better animals are sold by private treaty. There is a constant demand in Mekka for good donkeys,

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and as much as forty pounds is sometimes paid for one. Magnificent beasts the best of them are, of a blue-grey colour, with nearly white legs and belly. They usually have the ends of their tails dyed a bright orange colour with henna, with rings of the same round hock and fetlock.

On the western side of El Maala lies the great cemetery called Garâfat el Maala, or Jannat el Maala. After passing this the road becomes forty yards wide, and is covered with deep coarse sand. This part is called El Muâbda, and here in the early morning the Bedouins come to sell camels, goats, and sheep. Bearing at first to the north-east, and then eastward, the road now passes on through the valley El Abtah, to a point some three miles further, where it bifurcates—the right-hand branch leading to ‘Arafa, Jebel Kura, and Et-Tâif; while the left-hand branch leads to Et-Tâif by the route of the Wâdi El Yemânîya.

Returning now to the Sûk el Habb: the right-hand street—El Jowdhariya—is lined with clothiers’ and saddlers’ shops. The former sell Bedouin hair-cloth cloaks (abaya or mishlah), thawbs, kefîyas, ‘agâls (heavy circlets of hair-rope, worn on the head above the kefîya), sandals, and so on. The saddlers’ shops are stocked with camel and donkey saddles, halters, saddle-bags of leather or hair-cloth, hair ropes, and other articles of Bedouin saddlery. Further along are the armourers’ shops, where rifles, revolvers, swords, and daggers are sold. The favourite weapon of the Hijâzi Bedouins is the rifle. Revolvers are not prized in Arabia. The Nejdiers prefer the sword to all other weapons, though they carry rifles in addition. Daggers and swords must all be curved: a straight blade is worthless in the eyes of an Arab. I saw several straight

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French and Italian sword-bayonets in excellent condition, and was offered them for the equivalent of six-pence each.

Proceeding further, we find the street (which is here called El Muddaâ) covered with a wooden roof, which continues along its whole length to the point where it joins El Masâ. Shops, displaying every household requisite, and all sorts of foodstuffs, line the way; while at the Masâ end, and in the Masâ itself, are the stalls and shops of the principal fruiterers. Here, in July, I found sweet luscious melons, green apples—small but sweet, excellent pomegranates, large pleasant-tasting bananas, water-melons, excellent large blackberries, rather small but sweet figs, prickly pears, limes, and also excellent tomatoes and vegetable-marrows. Later, there were magnificent grapes and peaches. These are the products of the gardens and orchards of Et-Tâif, Wâdi Fâtma, and Wâdi Limûn.

A small street branches out of the left-hand side of El Muddaâ at, roughly, the half-way point between El Jowdharîya and the Masâ. In it are a number of jewellers' shops, and also the "Birthplace of our Lady Fâtma" (the Prophet's daughter). This was the house of Muhammad's first wife, Khadija. A stone which used to greet the Prophet with "es-salâm 'alaykum" was, until recently, shown to the gaping hâjjis. It projected from the wall of Khadija's house, but the puritanical Wahhâbîs have obscured it. Near this place also is a soup-kitchen for the poor, known as the Takkîya Sittna Fâtma.

Arrived at the bottom of El Muddaâ, one crosses El Masâ and enters a dark narrow alley, which is completely roofed, and whose floor of beaten earth is kept carefully swept and sprinkled with water. This is the

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drapery and perfumery market, and is called Es-Suwayga. It runs parallel to the north-west wall of the Haram, and is separated from it by a closely-built mass of houses divided by several narrow crooked lanes which lead to the several gates of the Mosque. In the Suwayga are displayed silk turban-shawls, calico, carpets, tarbûshes, embroidered waistcoats, strings of prayer-beads, phials of scent, and many similar articles. This is the favourite resort of the hâjjis before the midday prayer, and here may be seen wonder-eyed little Malays, chattering Indians, and unclean Persians jostling against tall Afghans and Turks—all of them looking, fascinated, at the coloured shawls and carpets hanging before the little shops; while the merchants sit calmly behind on the raised floors, which are also the counters, of their establishments. The shops in the Suwayga are merely square holes in the sides of houses, with which they do not communicate. All the merchants have private houses elsewhere.

Half way down the Suwayga, on the right-hand side, is the Sûk el 'Abîd, or Slave Market. This is a very narrow street, the tall houses on either side of which allow very little daylight to filter down to the lower storeys. It is made even more narrow by the presence of long benches of stone, resembling large, high steps, in front of some of the houses. On these benches, at morning and late afternoon, sit the slaves—awaiting purchasers. Passing up this lane one day, accompanied by Abd esh-Shukûr, a cynical grey-headed kinsman of my mutawwif, I found it crowded with Wahhâbîs, who were eyeing the goods critically. The latter sat on the stone benches, as stolid as cows in a field for the most part, though I thought I saw a trace of anxiety in the wistful eyes of one or two of the younger girls as

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the scowling Wahhâbîs stared them over. These slaves were mostly Africans, but here and there a light-brown skin marked a native of the Yemen or of Mekka. They were of all ages, from eight or nine years to fifty, and of both sexes. The majority of the men wore no more than a smock—the short thawb of the Mekkan slaves, water-carriers, and pedlars—reaching to a little below the knees, and dyed with indigo. The females were dressed in a similar garment with the addition of cotton trousers beneath it, and a malaya (a large sheet of dark-blue or black material, which is thrown over the head, and completely covers the body including the hands). Upon being requested by a prospective purchaser, or by their owners, to raise their veils, the slave women complied without hesitation. Abd esh-Shukûr told me that jâriyas (slave girls) were then selling at from thirty to eighty pounds each, according to youth, beauty, and efficiency in household duties. The male slaves (*abd*; plural, *abîd*) cost somewhat less.

As I was looking, with the uneasy feeling of one who commits an outrage against some natural law, at this strange company of silent sitters, a discreet voice at my ear, murmured—"Would you like to buy an excellent slave girl? I have one in the house—beautiful. Do you wish to see her?"

I turned my head, and found that a lean Mekkan of middle-age, with a careful, courteous face but changeful eyes, was standing behind my right shoulder.

"Would you like to see her?" he said again.

I glanced at Abd esh-Shukûr.

"Is your house near?" he asked the slave-owner.

"Near! Wallah!" said the latter. "Would you like to come?"

"No harm," I replied.

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We followed the man into one of the dark houses, and up the stairs to the first floor. Arrived here, he showed us into a dim carpeted room with cushions round the walls.

"Welcome!" he said affably. "Sit!"

We sat down on the carpet, and leant our backs against the cushioned wall, while our host went out of the room. Soon he returned, bearing a tray upon which rested three finjâns of coffee. We each took a finjân, and sipped. Then, rising again, he went to the door and called "O Saadîya!"

A door opened on the floor above, and words passed between our host and a woman. Presently we heard the clatter of slippers descending the stairs, and then a woman, shrouded and veiled in white, entered the room, dropping her slippers at the door as she came in.

"Sit, O my daughter!" said the man, and the lady seated herself calmly.

"Uncover thy face, O Saadîya!" said he; whereupon, without hesitation, she raised her veil and threw it back over her head.

I saw a fat round face of a very pale hue, in which lay embedded two coal-black eyes, their edges blackened with kohl. Kohl is a collyrium. It is usually antimony powder. Men use it as well as women. The lady's face wore an expression of boredom and vacuity. The fairness of her complexion caused me to think she might be a Syrian, and possibly half-French or Greek.

"De quel pays êtes vous?" I asked her.

"I do not understand," she said in Arabic, and without any show of interest.

"You are speaking Turkish?" asked her owner.

"Yes," I replied, taking the risk of his knowing Turkish. "I asked her what was her country."

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"She is a Mekkan," he replied, "but her father was a Circassian youth belonging to one of the Ashrâf, and her mother was a Yemen slave girl. She knows not Turkish."

We spoke of the poor girl's age, and of this and of that, and finally the man said: "Would you like to see her uncovered—that is to say, uncovered?"

I turned quickly to Abd esh-Shukûr.

"Shaykh Hamza!" I said, in the tone of one who suddenly remembers something of great importance.

Abd esh-Shukûr looked at me without surprise, as his manner was.

"Ay yes," he said, non-committally.

"Our appointment with him is for an hour before noon," I said earnestly. "We must go at once."

"True!" said Abd esh-Shukûr.

We rose: we expressed regret for our sudden departure; we explained the imperative nature of our engagement with the mythical Shaykh Hamza; we hoped to visit our host again at this time to-morrow; we blessed him; we shook his hand; we left him.

Abd esh-Shukûr said no word as we passed out of the slave market and threaded our way down the narrow lane which leads to the mosque gate called Bâb Durayba, but his eyes twinkled as he looked at me.

"An excellent jâriya," I said, "but a person like myself, who is travelling, is better without a woman."

"True!" said the old gentleman. "Better leave her to Shaykh Hamza."

The shops of the Suwayga come to an end near the western angle of the Haram, but the narrow street continues westward, roofless here, until it joins the main street of the city at the Donkey-drivers' Coffee-house in the Shubayka. There is a Turkish bath in this

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part of the street, but it is at present disused and falling into ruin. The quarter lying adjacent to Es-Suwayga on its north-western side is known as Esh-Shâmîya.

An important street runs north and south from the wholesale fruit market, El Halaga, to the high ground called El Falg, on which stands the fort Galaat Filfil. This street is known, at the end nearest to El Halaga, as En-Nagâ. Further south it assumes the name Es-Sulaymânîya, and finally becomes El Falg. It is thus named after the quarters through which it passes. The quarter El Falg is much favoured as a place of residence by the Malays. Between El Falg and the Suwayga market lies the quarter called El Garâra, in which stands a large palace of the Sharifs. Eastward of this is the quarter called Er-Rakûba, which extends as far as El Muddaâ.

Returning now to Sûk es-Saghîr, and proceeding in a south-easterly direction down this street, which lies in the watercourse, or wâdi, of Mekka, one finds that it bears sharply to the left at about three hundred paces from the Haram gate called Bâb Ibrâhîm. Situated at this bend, lies the quarter El Hajla, and here are sold bundles of firewood and twisted ropes (or "crosses") of dry camel grass, which is used as fodder. This fuel-and-fodder market is known as Sûk el Hajla, and the dealers who carry on business here are mostly poor Africans who collect their material in the hills about Wâdi Et-Tarafayn. A street branches out of El Hajla to the right, and passing through the quarter called El Khandarîsa, joins Harât el Bâb on the north.

The road, after passing El Hajla, proceeds due south, and is known as El Misfala. To the right it is overhung by Jebel Umar, a detached hill some six hundred feet

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in height. At its lower end where it enters the Wâdi Et-Tarafayn, it converges with, and ultimately joins, two other roads: one coming from El Jiyâd, and known as El Misyâl (this is also a watercourse); the other coming from Sûk es-Saghîr, at a point nearly opposite the Zugâg es-Suwag, and called Hârat Abi Bakr es-Sidîg.

Eastward of the Haram, and to the south of Jebel Abi Cubays, lies the large ravine called Jiyâd. This was the Turkish residential quarter in the days of the Empire, and it still contains some of the finest houses in Mekka. The most noteworthy of these, though not the best as a dwelling, is the palace of the Sharîfs, called Bayt es-Sâda, which stands at the foot of Jebel Jiyâd, immediately beneath the fortress, with which it is said to communicate by means of a subterranean passage.

The houses of Mekka are well built of a very fine dark-grey granite, which is quarried behind Jebel Umar, and in the upper end of Jiyâd. It is also procured from a hill called Jebel el Kaaba, which lies between Hârat el Bâb and El Khandarîsa, and which supplied the stone with which the Kaaba itself is built. The stone is carried from the quarries on the backs of donkeys.

Formerly it was considered a crime to build houses so high as to overlook the Kaaba, but at the present day most of the houses of Mekka possess that distinction. In the centre of the city they are usually three, four, or five storeys in height, being built so as to accommodate as many hâjjis as possible. The flat roof of every house is bordered with a parapet, six or seven feet in height, constructed of bricks. The bricks of Mekka have a peculiar form. They are about seven inches by four,

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and only an inch and a half thick, and are precisely similar to the bricks used in the building of El Fustât in Egypt—the city founded by ‘Amr ibn el ‘Aas in 640 A.D. Bricks of this form are no longer manufactured in Egypt, but are only found in the old Arab ruins there. It would appear that either the Arabs used bricks of this form in Arabia before they conquered Egypt, or else that the Mekkans imported the idea from Egypt after that event. However that may be, bricks precisely similar to those found in the ruins of El Fustât are manufactured in Mekka at this day. They are made at a place at the lower end of El Misfala where it joins the Wâdi et-Tarafayn.

The floors of the houses are of planks, over which is spread a thick layer of fine sandy earth, which is beaten flat. Rush matting is laid over this, and then carpets. The projecting ornamental woodwork windows, known as *mashrabîyas*, are seldom seen in Mekka. In their place are wooden shutters, flush with the walls, which slide up and down like railway-carriage windows, and are secured in position by means of iron hooks. Timber is imported from the East Indies and from Burma, and in the newer type of Mekkan houses the whole of the façade of the house is made of wood.

The houses of Mekka, having been built, are very rarely repaired until they begin to fall down. As a consequence of this, the streets in every part of the city have a ruinous appearance. Heaps of refuse lie in every untrodden corner, for the streets of Mekka also act as its dust-bins. A number of boys with donkeys are employed to carry the rubbish in pannier baskets to the outskirts of the city, but their activities do not avail to keep Mekka clean.

In most of the streets there are oil-lamps fixed to the

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corners of houses at long intervals. These are lighted at night during the first and last weeks of the lunar month; but when the moon gives sufficient light they are left unlighted. On any but a moonlit night great care must be exercised in groping one's way about the streets of the city to avoid colliding with other pedestrians, or stumbling over sleeping dogs or other obstructions.

XII

‘ARAFA

UPON returning to Abdurrahmân’s house, after performing the preliminary ceremonies of the Hajj, I breakfasted with my host, and immediately afterwards lay down on a folded lihâf—a thick quilt stuffed with cotton—and went to sleep.

It was some four hours later that I awoke to find a thin bronze-coloured grey-haired man sitting placidly beside me, with his back against the wall-cushions, smoking a cigarette. He was dressed in the Mekkan drawers and gown of cotton, with a bright-red folded shawl about his waist. He wore on his head a yellow turban, and his neck was adorned with a long silver chain, attached to a watch which he carried in the fold of his waistband. He had left his sandals outside the door of the room, as is the custom.

“Take your rest!” said he, as I commenced to sit up.
“Take your rest, O Effendi!”

I sat up and held out my hand, which he took in his own, and holding my thumb for a moment, he let it go and kissed his hand.

“Who is your presence?” I asked him.

This form of address he at once treated as a joke, which it undoubtedly is to anybody but an Egyptian or Syrian.

“My presence is a ‘youth’* of Abdurrahmân’s, and

* Sabi (pronounced Sobbee) is literally “a little boy.” The word is used in Mekka to denote a mutawwif’s assistant, whether he be ten years old or sixty.

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my name is Abd esh-Shukûr," he replied, with a twinkling eye.

This man, in subsequent days, was frequently my companion in my walks about Mekka and its neighbourhood. His knowledge of his native town was not profound, as he could not read, but he was seldom at a loss to supply an answer to a question concerning it. His age was probably a year or two over fifty, and his shoulders were slightly bowed with the weight of those years. His father, an Indian, had settled in Mekka and married an Arab wife, and Abd esh-Shukûr now owned a small house on the slope of Jebel Hindi.

My new friend had never been outside Mekka, excepting to go to Et-Tâif. He had never been to Jidda; he had never been to El Medîna. This is a very common condition among the Mekkans: hundreds of them have never been outside that rock-walled pit, save to go the half-day journey to 'Arafa for the annual pilgrimage.

Abd esh-Shukûr now took a pinch of tobacco from his little tin box, and rolling a cigarette he offered it to me.

"God bless you!" I said, "but I am a Wahhâbî."

"Good!" said he, with a smile. "Then you may smoke in the house as the Mudayyina do, but not in the street. That is to say, the act of drinking smoke is not unlawful. The unlawful is for a man to let people see him drinking smoke. Is that not so? That is to say, the unlawful . . ."

I took the cigarette, and lighted it.

"For the sake of friendship between me and between you," I said.

"Known!" he said, "and we are your servants."

"What happened when the Mudayyina came into Mekka?" I asked him.

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“There came four men wearing the ihrâm and riding camels, and they passed down the streets, which were deserted, and cried out the promise of security, and that the people of Mekka—the Neighbours of God—were under the protection of God and of Ibn Sa‘ûd. And all of us had locked and barred our doors. And in the second day there came two thousand of the Mudayyina, ihrâmed and carrying rifles and swords, all mounted on deluls. Then they all performed the towâf, and went out again to El Abtah, the place of their camp. After a few days they broke into the palace of Sayyidna (Our Lord, i.e. King Husayn), and tied up a donkey in his sitting-place. And on the donkey’s head they put the turban of Sayyidna. After that they drove the donkey, and he wearing the turban, out into the streets, and went round the city with him in front of them. Then they kicked the jewelled Stambûli coat of Sayyidna, and his jewelled state umbrella, into the market-place with their feet, and sold them for five piastres (about sixpence).”

“Did you see this?” I asked him.

“No!” replied Abd esh-Shukûr. “Thus we heard.”

At this moment there entered the room a thin and simple-looking youth with a bronze-coloured skin and handsome eyes. He was probably seventeen years of age. Over his white thawb he wore a pink silk jacket, and on his head a yellow turban.

“Es-salâm ‘alaykum,” he said in greeting, and going to the old man, he kissed the back of his hand and put his forehead to it for a moment.

“This,” said the old man, “is my son. His name is Abdul Fattâh,” and addressing his son, he added, “this is Hâjj Ahmad Effendi, the guest of Abdurrahmân. It is upon you to serve him well.”

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"Welcome!" said Abdul Fattâh, his eyes shining with cordiality as he attempted to kiss my hand.

I smiled at the youth (he afterwards became my constant attendant in Abdurrahmân's house), and asked him where he had been when the Wahnâbis entered Mekka.

"I? I was with the harîm in this house," he said without a blush. "Wallah! I dressed in the clothes of a woman, with a veil over my face, and a malaya. My appearance was like a woman's exactly. If the mudayyina had broken open the door, there was I one of the harîm."

"White upon you,* O Abdul Fattâh!" said Abdurrahmân, who now entered the room.

The portly mutawwif seated himself comfortably, with his back against a cushion; and taking a tobacco box from the fold of his belt, he commenced to roll a cigarette.

It being Friday, the Muslim Sabbath, all my companions wore clean clothes; and now, as we sat talking, the sound of the adân broke in upon us. The minaret of Bâb el 'Omra was only a few feet away from the back of Abdurrahmân's house, and its topmost gallery overlooked part of our roof. Many a time from that minaret in after days the resonant voice of the blind muaddin, Abdul Ghaffâr, or of another, went swelling and echoing over the house-top—waking me before dawn as I lay in the cool silence under the stars.

Having performed ablutions, we all descended to the Haram; and choosing a convenient place under the cloisters, we performed the sunna prayer of two prostrations, and then sat to meditate, repeat parts of

* "White upon thee" may be translated by the colloquialism "good for you!" i.e. "bravo!"

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the Korân, or observe the congregation, until the chanting of the igâma, or "beginning" of the congregational prayer.

Prayers being over, many of the congregation proceeded to perform towâf. Among these, I observed a broad figure, over six feet in height, dressed in a yellow mishlah, and carrying a black umbrella as a protection from the sun. He compassed the House with long deliberate strides, and at his heels pressed a motley crowd of Bedouins. This was Abdul Azîz Ibn Sa'ûd, the Bedouin lord of the desert and invader of the Hijâz.

Before we returned to the house, Abdurrahmân introduced me to one Sayyid Hasan, who, he said, was to be my Zemzemi; that is to say, he was the person who would give me a drink of Zemzem water whenever I might want it, particularly at prayer times.

This old man was the hereditary lord of a tiny stone-walled cavern in the wall of the Haram. A small but heavy wooden door a few yards from the Bâb ed-Dâûdiya—through which we usually entered the Haram—gave access to this cave, and here before his cavern door old Hasan was usually to be found at any hour of the day—either chanting the Korân in a low voice, or sleeping in a high one.

He was a short and stocky little man with a thin grey beard. His yellow turban was always immaculate, both as to cleanliness and folding. A man of over sixty years, his face was lined and furrowed in all directions, and his eyes were a trifle dim. He always exhibited an extremely pleasant manner, and delighted to pour out for the hâjjis, not only a draught of Zemzem water, but a copious stream of historical information concerning Mekka. His cavern, some ten feet square, was situated beneath the house of the Chief Judge of

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Mekka, which abutted upon the Haram. The Cadi's house possessed windows, above the door of Hasan's cave, which looked into the Mosque from beneath the roof of the cloisters. Within the old man's cavern, the roof of which was arched and little more than seven feet above the ground at its highest point, were two stone tanks, some four feet long by two feet broad and three feet deep. These tanks held Zemzem water. They were situated against the wall at the farther end of the cave, and on either side were stacks of clay water-jars. Several empty tins for dipping water were scattered about on the damp floor, and in one corner was a pile of the little shallow white-metal basins in which Hasan offered the nectar to the thirsting hâjjis. The only means of ventilation in this chamber were the door and two tiny holes in the right-hand wall, which latter admitted a little air from the passage outside Bâb ed-Dâûdiya. The cavern had a musty smell, like that of most water-sodden caves, and was always in semi-darkness.

In this dank place Sayyid Hasan, like some wizard, would dole out the precious water to his assistant, a flat-footed pleasant-faced minion of middle age, name Jaafar. Jaafar, with the water-bottle held on his left hip and a couple of little metal bowls in his right hand, would then issue from the cave, seeking whom he might relieve of thirst.

Only Hasan's personal friends, among whom I was eventually counted, ever dared to set foot over the damp threshold of that dismal but exclusive chamber. A hâjji who exhibited sufficient financial proof of his regard for the old man, however, might even, an he would, bathe himself completely in holy Zemzem water within the cave.

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Sayyid Hasan commanded the services of a second assistant. This was a huge black slave, of terrifying shape and size, named Murjayn (Little Coral). This sprite's duties consisted of filling an enormous water-skin at the well Zemzem and bearing it to his master's cave, where he emptied its contents into one or other of the tanks.

The office of "waterer" to the hâjjis is pre-Islamic in origin, and is hereditary. There is nothing to prevent a hâjji from going to the Well itself, where there is usually at least one water-drawer who will pull up a bucketful of water for him. The water coming fresh from the Well, however, is warm, and therefore is less palatable than when it has been cooled. The Zemzemis pour it into their porous jars, where it quickly becomes cool. Each Zemzemi has one or more wooden stands outside the cloisters opposite his cave, in which he places his jars full of water. Nobody is ever forbidden to drink from these, but their owner naturally expects a gratuity from those who can afford to give it. The Zemzemis or their "youths" constantly offer a bowl of their coolest water to better class hâjjis, whenever they see one sitting near. The gratuity is usually given after the conclusion of the Hajj, when the pilgrim is about to depart from Mekka. The mutawwifs often go out on the Jidda road, either on foot or mounted on asses, in order to meet the pilgrim caravans. On these occasions they usually take with them a jar of Zemzem water, from which they offer a drink to any of their own hâjjis who may be in the caravan. Some of them even send the water in girbas to their agents in Jidda for this purpose.

Having drunk a draught of water poured out by the master-hand of Sayyid Hasan, I returned with the mutawwifs to Abdurrahmân's house. Here we were

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joined by two of my host's familiar friends. One was a Zemzemi named Sabri. A man of little more than thirty years, he reminded me with peculiar vividness of pictures of King Henry VIII. The other was a mutawwif of Albanians and Turks, named Yûsef, who had on several occasions travelled in the Balkan States, on begging and hâjji-catching tours, in the days of the Turkish Empire. He was a man of perhaps sixty years, but his dark skin was very smooth, and his eyes clear and bright. He told many marvellous tales of his travels, and whenever his grey beard commenced to wag the silence of absorption would fall upon the remainder of our company.

There remained yet three days before the Day of 'Arafa, and during those three days, and part of the day following, I must continue to wear the ihrâm. Fatigued by my journey, I spent most of my time before the Hajj in sleeping. Abdurrahmân or Abdul Fattâh awoke me at each of the five times of prayer; and, accompanied by one or both of these, I would descend to the Haram and perform the prayers and towâf. The pilgrims usually perform towâf in the morning and evening of each day of their stay in Mekka. It is considered one of the highest acts of worship, and the Mekkans frequently perform it. Such occasional towâf, forming no part of the Hajj nor 'Omra, is performed in one's ordinary clothes. Pilgrims, however, entering Mekka under the "intention" of performing Hajj or 'Omra, cannot discard the ihrâm until they have completed the ceremonies of whichever of those rites they have "intended" to perform.

Aburrahmân left me in occupation of the room which I had first entered, on the third floor of his house. This room measured some fifteen feet by twelve,

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and was furnished with a carpet and cushions. It was approached from the landing through a two-leaved door, which gave access to a little ante-room of the same length as the main room, but only six feet broad. The floor of the large room was a step higher than that of the ante-room, and another two-leaved door connected the two chambers. On the outer door were painted the numbers "10" and "5." This signified that, in the event of the room being let to Malay pilgrims, no more than ten persons were to be allowed to reside in the large room, and five in the smaller one. Similar numbers are to be observed on the doors of all the rooms in the mutawwifs' houses, having been placed there by order of the government. The authorities found it necessary to make this rule because, according to Abdurrahmân, "Malays die quickly if they are over-crowded."

These two rooms became my private quarters during the following eight months. Excepting at meal times, I could nearly always count upon being left alone if I shut the outer door of this apartment, and thus in Mekka I experienced no difficulty in writing my notes without fear of being observed.

Abdurrahmân, one of the principal mutawwifs of the Palestinians, usually had a thousand hâjjis or more for whom to provide quarters during the pilgrimage season. The Wahhâbî invasion, however, had this year left him without a single hâjji save myself. Mutawwifs with large numbers of hâjjis hire houses in different parts of the city in which to accommodate them. Many of the Malay hâjjis like to lodge near the Haram, and are willing to pay highly for that privilege. Consequently, a man whose house is near the Haram will rent it to a mutawwif of Malays, and accommodate his

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own hâjjis in hired houses in a cheaper quarter. Abdurrahmân yearly let his house (with the exception of the top floor and the roof, which he occupied with his family) to a Malay mutawwif for three months. For this he received forty pounds, which was over ten pounds more than the rent which he paid annually for the whole house.

Asleep most of the time, I passed the three days before the Hajj not uncomfortably, save for the wearing of the ihrâm. Meals were served twice daily—soon after sunrise and at mid-afternoon.

One day Abdurrahmân, growing confidential, showed me his death-register—a book which each mutawwif keeps by order of the government. In it are entered the names and addresses of pilgrims who die while in a mutawwif's care, together with a list of the deceased's effects. The latter are handed over to the government to await the claim of the dead person's relatives. Abdurrahmân had had twenty-seven deaths among his thousand hâjjis of the previous year, he smilingly informed me, and on looking down the list I found that nobody among that departed company had left more than a couple of pounds in cash, while most of them appeared to have died in circumstances of complete destitution. This struck me as curious; as, unless they came to Mekka expressly to die there, they would presumably have possessed at least sufficient means to enable them to return to Palestine. Many poor wretches beg their way to Mekka, but such do not lodge with mutawwifs. It is true, however, that many old people, when they feel themselves to be approaching dissolution, go to Mekka in order to die there, and be buried within the sacred limits of the Haram.*

* The word "Haram" may mean the walled court of the Great

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At last the sun went down on the 8th Du-l Hijja 1343 A.H. (29th June, 1925), and the Day of 'Arafa had arrived. Abdurrahmân had hired a camel with a shugduf for himself and me, and immediately after the sunset prayer the animal was brought into the narrow approach to Bâb El 'Omra, in readiness for us to mount.

The shugduf, or camel-litter, consists of a pair of stretchers, each of which is over five feet in length and two and a half feet broad. These are constructed similarly to the sirîr, or kursî—of a wooden framework strung with plaited fibre cords. A dome-shaped hood of bent sticks, over which the occupant ties his carpet, acts as a protection from the sun. The two stretchers are fastened together, side by side, with ropes; and they rest one on either side of the camel's saddle. Two little baskets, used for holding water-bottles and food, are sewn with string to the hood of each half of the shugduf.

Abdurrahmân, clad in the ihrâm, now mounted with me into the litter. As soon as we had settled ourselves comfortably, the Bedouin in charge of the camel started to lead his animal through the narrow lanes. The shugduf frequently came into violent collision with the walls of the houses, but eventually we reached Sûk es-Saghîr without serious mishap. Passing along by the south-western wall of the Haram, it became

Mosque; or it may mean the whole of Mekka, together with the surrounding territory within the sacred limits. These limits are marked by pairs of stone pillars built beside the roads leading out of the city, at an average distance of fifteen or twenty miles from its centre. "Mekka kulluhâ Haram" say the Mekkans. "Mekka is all Haram." This they say when they hear the adân, but wish to pray in their houses or wherever they happen to be, meaning "Why need we go to the Haram Mosque to pray? Here we are already in the Haram." The limits of the Haram territory of El Medina are less exactly defined.

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evident that our camel was lame, and it now began to groan and cry. At that the Bedouin told us to dismount, and having baraked the animal, he readjusted the shugduf. We mounted again and rode a few yards farther. Arrived in El Gashâshîya, however, it became apparent that the wretched camel would, in the course of a mile or so, either shake our shugduf until it fell in pieces from his back, or himself die—perhaps both. In these circumstances we decided to return to the house, and then hire another animal. Vehement discussions and exchanges of repartee between Abdurrahmân, the camel-driver, and members of the crowd proceeding to 'Arafa whose progress we obstructed, enlivened our journey back to Bâb el 'Omra. On arrival at our house, Abdurrahmân told me to go in and sleep, while he scoured the town in search of another camel. I obeyed his instructions implicitly; and just before midnight, my triumphant mutawwif awoke me with the rousing information that he had applied to the government, and with its help had procured the "best camel in Mekka." Again we descended to the street, where, in the fugitive light of the young moon, I saw two camels couched. One of these was certainly a fine animal, a clean and robust-looking Nejdi, which contrasted with our first mount as a hunter to a lame cab-horse.

"Look!" said Abdurrahmân with pride. "The best camel in Mekka. Ashkal jamal . . ." Then he jumped back a couple of paces, for the "best camel in Mekka," displeased with the Bedouin's activities about his saddle, or contemptuous of the praise of one who would presume to ride him, wreathed up his flaggy lip, and bending his snake-like neck round his shoulder, made a vicious grab at the mutawwif's arm. Having missed



A CAMEL UTTERING GROANS OF PROTEST
WHILE BEING LOADED

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his mark, he subsided into his former position, and began to chew his cud with carnivorous growls.

Mounting into the shugduf, we pursued our way down the dark lanes. The camel-driver, Tahsîn by name, rode bare-back on the second camel, in front of us. We passed by the Haram, and proceeded down El Gashâshîya. Numbers of the upper-class Mekkans, on tasselled and caparisoned deluls, went by us at a jerking trot. Small caravans of Moors, Bokhârans, and Indians, riding in shugdufs, passed slowly along the sandy road in the semi-darkness. Numbers of Takârana (sing. Takrûni), and other poor Africans, padded along on foot beneath the camels. Many of the Mekkans rode on asses.

As we came to the outskirts of the city, a strange intentness seemed to fall upon this weird band of travellers. No sound of laughter or of commonplace speech was now heard among them. Even the cries of the camel-drivers to their beasts did not dispel the tense influence which pervaded the midnight scene. The only words spoken by the white-clad hâjjis were pious exclamations and praise to God, and most frequent of these was the “talbiya.” It was like a great company of pious white-shrouded ghosts passing along in the silent night beneath the moon.

We passed the graveyard El Maala, and continuing down the wide sandy road El Abtah, we presently came to the place where the road bifurcates before a mountain spur. Proceeding by the right-hand road, we found the sandy soil begin to exhibit outcroppings of rock, and now on either hand the grim black hills closed in upon us, until the road lay in a narrow passage between them. At a short distance further on, the road began to rise sharply as we approached Mina. On the

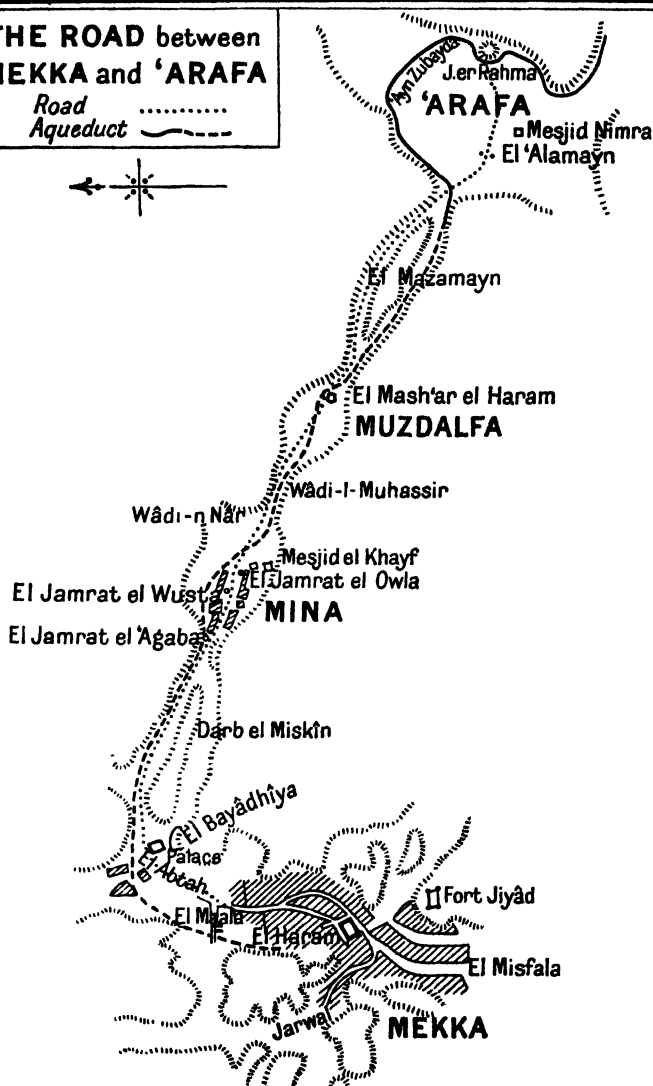
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left-hand side, at the top of the rise, we came to a stone buttress, eight feet high and nearly five feet broad, which is built against the rocky hillside. This object is known as El Jamrat el 'Agaba, or, vulgarly, the Great Devil (Esh-Shaytân el Kibîr). It is one of the three pillars at which the hâjjis throw stones on their return from 'Arafa. A few yards further on, we found ourselves pacing between the two long lines of old dilapidated houses and shops which form the street of Mina (pronounced Minna, sometimes Mûnna). Here we found signs of commercial activity. The coffee-shops were open and doing a brisk trade, while vendors of dates, bread, prickly pears, and mahallabîya (a kind of blanc-mange), sat at intervals all down the street. The houses of Mina form the strangest collection of little fantastic khans in the world. They are mostly of a single storey, and are raised up from the ground like theatre boxes. Open at back and front, and without shutters, they are simple camping places—stone-built tents. The interiors of some of them are decorated with crude painting in many coloured designs, and the beams of unhewn timber which support the flat roofs are painted a bright red or blue. Wealthy pilgrims hire these dwellings for the three-day period of the annual Mina "season." There are several fine houses at the western end of the street, notably those belonging to the Sayyid Umar As-Sagâf and the Shaykh Esh-Shaybi. As for the shops, they are merely stone cubicles open at the front, their stone-paved floors being but a single step above the level of the sandy road.

At a word from Abdurrahmân, Tahsîn halted his camels before a booth of hair-cloth stretched on poles, beneath which was spread a piece of rush-matting.

THE ROAD between MEKKA and 'ARAFA

Road
Aqueduct - - - - -



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Here we sat to refresh ourselves with tea supplied by the owner of the booth. Then mounting again, we proceeded on our way down the village street, in which there stood, at an interval of three or four hundred yards apart, two isolated square stone pillars, seven or eight feet in height. These were El Jamrat el Wusta and El Jamrat el Owlâ, the remaining two “devils” which the pilgrims stone on their return from ‘Arafa. At the eastern end of the street are more rows of the tiny stone cubicles which are used as shops during the Hajj, and also a number of stone ovens for baking bread.

After leaving the street of Mina, which is half a mile long, we found the valley widen out to a breadth of a mile. This continues for a distance of rather more than a mile before the hills again close in upon the sandy track, leaving only a narrow ravine called Wâdi-l Muhassir. On the left-hand side of the valley of Mina, immediately before it merges into Wâdi-l Muhassir, lies a ravine, or basin. This is called Wâdi-n-Nâr, and is the site of the Battle of the Elephant. Shortly before the time of Muhammad, Abraha, the Christian king of the Yemen, wishing to make his capital, Sanaa, the religious centre of Arabia (as Mekka was then, under idolatry, as it is now, under Islâm), sent an army to attack the Curaysh and destroy the Kaaba. At the head of this army there marched an elephant, which had been brought from Ethiopia. The Curaysh, feeling themselves unable to cope with the hosts of El Yemen, retired into the hills about Mina and Mekka. When the advancing army reached Wâdi-n-Nâr, however, the elephant, upon which rode Abraha, refused to proceed any further, and thus brought the army to a halt. At this moment a large flock of birds, carrying stones in

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their bills and claws, flew over the invading army, upon which they dropped the stones—killing everyone whom they struck. Those who escaped with their lives from this aerial attack, perceiving how unfair a game can be in which everything is fair, fled. This event is commemorated in the Korân—Chapter *The Elephant*—in the following words:

“Didst thou not see how thy Lord dealt with the Owners of the Elephant? Did He not turn their treachery into [a means of] causing [their] destruction: sending upon them birds in flocks, which pelted them with stones of baked clay. Thus He rendered them as [nothing more than] gnawed corn-stalks.”

As we entered the ravine called Wâdi-l Muhassir, the road rose perceptibly; and a mile or more further on the hills again fell away on either hand, leaving an almost circular basin, more than a mile in diameter. This place is called Muzdalfa. Near its eastern extremity is a mosque, and also a bâzân, or stone water-tank, sunk in the ground. This tank is filled from the aqueduct of the spring called ‘Ayn Zubayda, which passes near it.

Passing out of the basin of Muzdalfa, the road again enters a narrow rock-walled passage called El Mazamayn, which continues for nearly three miles until it finally debouches into the wide plain of ‘Arafât. Half way along El Mazamayn we halted in order to perform the dawn prayer.

For the last hour of our journey the dawn had been slowly lightening the clear sky to eastward, and now, as we left the enclosing walls of the narrow sandy bottom and emerged into the spacious plain, all the

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black jagged summits of the hills which fell away on either side of us were suddenly crowned with gold. Before our eyes extended a perfectly level plain, some four miles across from west to east, and nearly twice that distance from north to south. Scrub and thorn bushes, black and dry as though charred by fire, grew sparsely here and there, and on the northern side were several meagre patches of green cultivation clustered about a well. Directly in front of us, in the centre of the opposite mountain wall, as we approached from the west, was a towering conical peak, and a little way in front of this stood a small isolated hill some two hundred feet in height. The latter, which is called *Jebel Er-Rahma*, is surmounted by a column built of granite blocks, cemented together and whitened. From the summit of the hill the Hajj sermon is preached, and the column is a distinguishing mark to enable travellers to recognise the hill from a distance. The column is five feet square, and between twenty and twenty-five feet high. It stands in the north-western corner of a square stone-paved platform on the top of the hill. This platform measures seven yards by eight, and in the middle of its northern side stands a *mihrâb*, called the Prophet's Prayer-niche. The platform is raised four feet above a terrace which surrounds it. This terrace is between ten and twelve yards broad, and it communicates with the upper platform by means of a small flight of steps. The annual sermon is preached from the upper platform; and if the season be hot, a rough awning is rigged up with the aid of a number of large nails, which are visible in the stone column at a height of fifteen feet from its base. The platform is edged with a stone coping, one foot in height, and the lower terrace is similarly fortified by a coping eighteen inches high.

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The aqueduct of 'Ayn Zubayda, coming from the southward, encircles the base of Jebel Er-Rahma on all sides save the eastern; and passing thence across the plain, northward, it ultimately turns westward along the base of the mountain range until it reaches a ravine somewhat to the southward of the gorge El Mazamayn. Here the aqueduct turns westward, and proceeds direct to Mekka, crossing the pilgrim road subterraneously at two places on its way. Under Jebel Er-Rahma it is carried along the top of a solid stone wall, some nine feet in height, which is built close in to the base of the hill. Part of the top of this wall also acts as a footpath, and is reached from the plain by means of flights of steps, of which there are four. Between 'Arafât and Mekka the aqueduct of Ayn Zubayda runs underground for the greater part of its course.

The platform on the summit of Jebel Er-Rahma is approached by a broad roughly-constructed stairway leading up the southern slope of the hill. This stairway makes first a left-hand turn, and then a right-hand turn, before it ultimately reaches the platform. On the right of the first turn is a little cleared space, called the Praying-place of Adam, being the place where the Angel Gabriel taught the first of mankind his prayers. The sides of the hill are very steep, and are covered with boulders of all sizes and shapes. In view of the fact that there are no boulders on the surrounding plain, this condition of the hill's surface strikes an observer as being rather surprising. In the spaces between the boulders, little enclosures within rough walls of piled stones have been made. Many of these are used as shops on the Day of 'Arafa.

Jebel Er-Rahma, or the Mount of Mercy, is frequently termed Jebel 'Arafa. At its base, it measures

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some three hundred yards in length from north-west to south-east, and one hundred and fifty yards from south-west to north-east. The whole region, hill and plain, in which the hâjjis encamp is called 'Arafât, which word is the plural of 'Arafa.

Crossing the plain on our way to Jebel Er-Rahma we came to a water-tank, called bâzân, which is filled from the aqueduct of 'Ayn Zubayda by means of a subsidiary stone channel which runs underground. A little further on we passed between the two wall-like pillars, called El 'Alamayn, which mark the boundary in this direction of the sacred territory of Mekka. From this it will be clear that 'Arafa is outside the limits of the sanctuary.

Tahsîn, instructed by Abdurrahmân, took us to within a couple of hundred yards of the south-western slope of Jebel Er-Rahma, where we dismounted. We then proceeded to pitch a small bell tent which the mutawwif had brought, tied beneath the shugduf. Near to us a party of Ashrâf were sitting in a large square tent, and in another were a score of Chinese-looking Bokhârans. Having arranged our baggage, Abdurrahmân and I lost no time in preparing tea and in breaking our fast.

During the morning I ascended the slope of Jebel Er-Rahma, which was crowded with lower-class hâjjis—Africans, Indians, and a few Malays. A number of the sellers of half-pennyworths from Sûk Es-Saghîr were there, selling their unappetising wares; and here and there, among the boulders, were men selling finjâns of coffee or tea, which they boiled with the aid of little fires of brushwood. At the southern foot of the hill was the Hajj market—a cluster of tents where meat bread, vegetables, and other articles of foodstuff were



A WATER TANK AT 'ARAFU

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INTERIOR OF THE MESJID NIMRA AT 'ARAFAT

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Turkish towels. It was the mutawwif Shafîg, whom I had last seen in El Lîth, and who had given me a note of introduction to Abdurrahmân. He greeted me effusively, and told me that he had walked out from Mekka. It appeared that he had reached the Sacred City an hour or so after Abdurrahmân and I had left it.

At midday I went with Shafîg to the Mesjid Nimra, an old stone mosque on the plain. It is an open quadrangle, some eighty yards square, enclosed within a massive battlemented stone wall, twenty feet in height. At the mihrâb end is a cloister of stone arches, which is six yards in width; and in the centre of the courtyard are three wells in line, over which stands a stone roof with five small domes, which is supported by massive square columns. The wells are supplied with water by a subterranean conduit from the aqueduct. There are five entrances to this mosque, all of which are in the north-eastern wall. No doors are fitted to these openings, and camels and goats use the building all the year with the exception of the Day of the Hajj. On our way back to the tent we passed the burly figure of Ibn Sa‘ûd, dressed in a couple of towels and bestriding a beautiful Nejd horse which looked rather like a little animated rocking-horse under his long form. He was attended by four mounted guards carrying rifles.

It is the correct thing to perform total ablution on the Day of ‘Arafa, but we forgot about that, as did most of the other hâjjis. Water, however, was abundant and cheap—two piastres for a small girba. Probably this was because the number of pilgrims present was so small. Qutb ed-Dîn, in his history of Mekka, says: “I remember that in the year 930 A.H. water was very scarce, and its price at ‘Arafa rose high. I bought a little girba of water, such as a man could

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almost carry with two fingers, for a gold *dinâr*." On one occasion during the reign of King Husayn a similar instance is said to have occurred.

There is no special graveyard at 'Arafa, though many thousands of pilgrims have died there. The dead are buried where they fall, and possibly a piece of stone is placed upon the shallow grave. The next pilgrimage coming round, the stone will perhaps be taken by somebody in order to build a temporary fireplace, and the place of sepulture, whence, in all probability, jackals will have long since dragged the body, will once more assume the semblance of virgin soil. In the course of the afternoon I saw a Yemen pilgrim expire in a sort of epileptic fit near the Hajj market, and I also observed two other bodies being borne to a little distance beyond the tents for burial.

At el 'asr, while a hot *simûm* wind swept the plain, renewed and general shouts of "*labbayk!*" broke forth on all sides, and looking towards Jebel Er-Rahma we could see the *khatîb*, or preacher, seated on his camel on the upper platform, reading the sermon. This sermon is the essential part of the pilgrimage. Unless he "*stands*" at 'Arafa during the sermon, the Muhammadan cannot claim to have performed the Hajj. As the *khatîb* proceeded with his preaching, the pilgrims who stood on the hill commenced to wave the *ridâ*, or upper garment of the *ihrâm*, above their heads. Each time the preacher cried "*labbayk!*" in the course of his sermon they increased these activities. This served as a signal to those on the plain, who were too far away to hear the voice of the *khatîb*. Seeing the waving *ihrâms* on Jebel Er-Rahma, they too cried "*labbayk!*" For some time the Bokhârans, and other *hâjjis* round about us, kept up a continuous chorus of praise and



PILGRIMS ON JEBEL ER-RAHMA

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supplication, not unmixed with weeping; but as sunset approached everybody commenced to strike his tent and prepare his baggage in readiness for departure. The Mekkan sharîfs whose tent was close to ours had six tall black slaves with them, and the work which these pampered individuals had to perform could have been done comfortably by one European servant.

The Hajj sermon consists chiefly of instruction in the rites of pilgrimage, together with very frequent repetitions of the talbiya and supplications to God to protect and strengthen the Muslimîn.

As the sun set, the khatîb wound up his matter; and immediately the hâjjis rushed down the steps of the hill, while simultaneously the whole of the plain came to strenuous life. Many of the dromedary riders—as the Mekkan ashraf, and the Nejdiers—had sat their animals during the latter part of the sermon. These now turned, and sped trotting across the plain towards the darkening gorge El Mazamayn. Others were busily mounting into shugdufs, or on donkeys; while all over the wide plain a great fog of dust arose, obscuring the bases of the hills so that their peaks alone were visible—appearing to float like heavy clear-cut clouds in the evening sky. Far out on the northern side of the plain rode the scattered hosts of the Nejd Ikhwân—dim masses of hasting camelry, obscurely seen in the falling dusk. Here and there in the midst of the speeding multitude, a green standard, borne aloft, suddenly flashed out from the dust-cloud, only to disappear the next moment behind the obscuring screen, which rose in spreading billows from beneath the feet of the thousands of trotting deluls.

Mounting into our shugduf, Abdurrahmân and I pushed our way over the plain among the vague

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droves of camels, mules, and donkeys. Shafîg, in his rose-pink towels, soon got lost in the crowd, as he had no mount, and we saw him no more until after our arrival at Mina. All about us rose the voices of pilgrims who had lost their companions, crying out names in the dusk as they searched among the hastening throng. Soon we were in the pass of El Mazamayn, and here the crush became more intimate. Occasionally our shugduf would come in contact with another, and for some time it seemed doubtful whether we should be flung to the ground, or ride out the impacts in safety. Most of the Wahnâbîs, all of whom rode dromedaries, had reached the gorge ahead of the other pilgrims and the Mekkans. Some few, however, still continued to come out of the blackness behind us—lurching by at a fast trot on their great upstanding deluls. As we proceeded I noticed several Wahnâbîs, ihrâmed like the rest, returning singly or in twos towards 'Arafa. Riding past at a walk, they scanned the crowd with piercing glances, paying particular attention to the foot travellers who were mixed indiscriminately among the camels and donkeys. These men were on police duty, searching for any sign of theft, or other misdemeanour (such as smoking), among the hurrying crowd. The days of the Pilgrimage form the most prosperous season for Mekka's thieves, but this year few cases of theft occurred, on account of the deterrent influence of the merciless Wahnâbîs. The penalty, in Islamic law, for a first offence of theft is the cutting off of the robber's right hand; for the second offence, of his left foot; for the third, his left hand; for the fourth, his right foot; for further offences he is to be reprovèd but not executed.

On the following day, at Mina, I saw a wretched



PILGRIMS ON THE ROAD DURING THE HAJJ

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Hijâzi Bedouin come running down the village street. He held his right forearm with his left and only remaining hand. The stump of the other arm was dripping blood, the hand having just been severed. Seeing a cauldron of boiling samn, at which a stall-keeper was cooking kufta (meat balls), the maimed malefactor ran up to it and thrust his forearm into the boiling grease. He held it there for a moment, and then drew it out and went quickly away, just in time to escape the impending blows of the stall-keeper. As he scuffled away, a gruesome object, which was suspended about his neck with a piece of string, swung from side to side. It was his severed hand.

Soon we emerged into the basin of Muzdalfa, and found it full of the couched deluls of the Wahhâbîs, lying, still saddled, all over the sandy valley. Their riders, with the glorious hardihood of the desert, lay sleeping beside them on the ground, without covering save the ihrâm, their rifles and swords under their hands.

At Muzdalfa we stayed until dawn, praying the sunset and 'eshâ prayers, drinking tea, and sleeping. We each gathered seven small stones here, which we washed seven times with water, and then tied in a corner of the ridâ. These were for the purpose of stoning the Great Devil at Mina.

Towards the eastern end of the valley of Muzdalfa, the ground rises somewhat. This rising ground is known as El Mash'ar el Harâm—the Sacred Sign. It is referred to in the Korân, Chapter *The Cow*, in these words:

“And when you quit 'Arafât, then praise God at the Sacred Sign.”

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This is the usual interpretation given to the passage, but in view of the fact that in the pre-Islamic "times of ignorance" there existed at Muzdalfa a shrine to the idol Guzah (or Cuzah), which idol was worshipped or propitiated with fire, I am inclined to suggest that the word "mash'ar" (i.e. an object perceived, a sign) should be written "mas'ar" (a place of fire), and for the following reasons:—

Originally, the Korân was written without diacritic points or vowel-signs, and the word which is now written "mash'ar" might at that time have been read equally well as "mas'ar." It is also probable, having regard to the, historically speaking, short memories of the Arabs, and to the lack of precision which they ever display in their mental processes, that the name of the place had undergone this slight change by pure accident, even before the Korân was written. The fact that the Korân was not written with finality until some years after its revelation tends to accommodate such a theory.

In addition to these possibilities, it is not improbable that the name El Mas'ar el Harâm was deliberately changed by the Founder of Islâm so that the Korân might not contain a passage which could be construed as admitting the genuineness, in its day, of the abhorred religion of the fire-worshipping Magians.

The form of the god Guzah is now unknown, but the rainbow is supposed to have been his weapon, and meteors and shooting-stars his arrows. The Arabic name for the rainbow is still "the Bow of Guzah."

El Mash'ar el Harâm is, according to the two Jalâls, "a hill at the end of Muzdalfa." What they mean is a slight rising ground in the basin. Here there stands, at the present time, a raised earthen platform held by

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stone walls, on which is built a tall minaret. This erection is known as the Mesjid Muzdalfa. The institution of "spending the night" here, then, is another instance of the incorporation of an idolatrous site into Islâm, clothed with a new religious ritual.

XIII

M I N A

ON the first appearance of light over the eastern hills, we performed the dawn prayer. Many of the hâjjis went to the platform of the mosque to pray, while others formed in rows near their camels, and led by one of their number as imâm, performed their prayers where they stood. Abdurrahmân and I joined ourselves to a party of Mekkans who were encamped near us.

Immediately after prayers, we mounted and moved off towards Mina, being frequently banged and bumped on the way through Wâdi Muhassir by the heedless trotting deluls of the Wahhâbîs. Moving on down the valley of Mina, we passed on our right the camping-place of the Egyptian Mahmal—a square walled courtyard containing a small stone pavilion. This year the place was unoccupied, as the Mahmal and its escort did not leave Cairo. Further along on the left was a ruined house of Ghâlib (Sharîf of Mekka 1202-1227 A.H.), and the camping-place of the Syrian Mahmal.

A mahmal (more correctly, mihmal) is literally a “carrier”—a contrivance in which things are carried. The mahmal which is sent annually to Mekka from Cairo is a cubic box-like contrivance, measuring five feet in all three dimensions, constructed of a wooden framework covered with richly embroidered red brocade. This is surmounted by a conical tent-like top, of the same materials, which is some five feet in height.

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At the apex of the conical top, and at each upper corner of the box, is a large gilded silver ornament, surmounted by a crescent. The bottom of the mahmal is so constructed as to allow of the contrivance being easily mounted on the saddle of the camel which bears it.

Mahmals similar to the Egyptian, but less magnificent, were formerly sent annually to Mekka by the Sultân of Turkey, with the Damascus caravan; and earlier, by the Caliphs of Bagdad; by the Imâms of the Yemen; by Ibn Rashîd, Prince of Hâil; by the Sultân of Darfûr; and, upon occasion, by the Maharajah of Hyderabad. These mahmals contained presents for the Haramayn, and for their inhabitants, which presents, being the gifts of princes, were naturally borne in magnificent receptacles.

It has been the custom of Islamic princes since the early years of Islâm to send valuable presents for the embellishment of the Kaaba at Mekka, and the tomb of Muhammad at El Medîna. Jewels, gold and silver lamps, incense burners, and other treasures, were sent for this purpose, together with the kiswa, or covering for the Kaaba, and drapings for the Prophet's tomb. They also sent, and still send, large sums of money for distribution among the resident population of the Holy Cities.

It is said that the custom of sending the Egyptian Mahmal to Mekka was instituted in the year 645 A.H. In that year Shajarat ed-Durr, Queen of Egypt, performed the Pilgrimage, using a riding-litter similar in form to the mahmal.

At the present time, the Mahmal serves no purpose save that of a banner or emblem of state. The only object of this description which is still sent annually to

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Mekka is the Egyptian Mahmal. A considerable quantity of treasure is carried in the Egyptian caravan, but the mahmal itself remains empty, and is borne on a specially selected camel at the head of the procession. It does not remain in Mekka, but is taken back to Cairo upon the conclusion of the pilgrimage.

Passing on towards the village of Mina, we next came to some little shops, and one of the large water-tanks called bâzân, on the right-hand side of the track; while to our left, close to the base of the encircling mountain, stood the mosque called Mesjid El Khayf. In front of this was the hospital, flying the Nejd flag; and beyond the hospital extended the long lines of little shops and dilapidated houses which border the street of Mina. On our way down the valley we passed by two Indians who were digging a small trench in the stony soil. On the ground near them lay a body wrapped in a white shroud.

Turning off the track, to the left, we selected a place which was fairly clear of stones, near the mosque of El Khayf, and proceeded to pitch our tent. Our Bedouin camel-driver took his beasts and himself away, as we should not want them for the next three days. The ground here was littered in all directions with the bones of animals which had been sacrificed in former years.

We had barely finished pitching the tent when Shafîg appeared in his beautiful pink towels. We now left him in charge of the tent while we went to stone the "Great Devil," which, as has been said, is a piece of wall built against a rock at the Mekka-ward end of the street of Mina. A continuous double stream of the poor mad Wahhâbîs went by us with unnecessary energy on their bouncing deluls as we walked down the sandy road. They came in at a fast trot,



ONE OF THE JAMRAS OR "DEVILS" AT MINA

The space within the circular stone wall is nearly full of stones which have been thrown

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dodging all over the narrow street. The long sleeves of their thawbs and the ends of their abayas flew loosely in the air, and from their saddles long tassels streamed and danced about their camels' knees. Arrived at the devils, they threw their stones without dismounting, and turning, rode wildly back again. Some of these had their women perched behind them on the animal's croup, while a few of the women rode alone, brandishing sticks and thwacking the ribs of their tall deluls, like the men. All these Wahhâbî women were shrouded from head to foot with a single black garment. Into this was sewn a piece of thinner material, also black, at the part which covered the face. This was to enable them to see and breathe to some extent.

We threw our seven stones, saying with each throw—"In the Name of God. God is Greatest. I stone the wretched devil. [Or, 'I stone the company of the devils.'] May the Merciful be pleased." Having done this we returned to our tent, purchasing a sheep from a Bedouin on the way.

At this stage in the Pilgrimage, all the little prohibitions against hair-cutting, covering the head, and so on, which the muhrim is obliged to conform to, are removed—excepting the prohibitions against associating with woman and using scent. These last do not become lawful until the pilgrim has completed the Hajj, by performing the Towâf El Ifâdha—the towâf of going away (i.e. from 'Arafa).

Seeing a man near our tent who was slaying the sheep and goats of some of the hâjjis, Abdurrahmân gave him a piastre to despatch my sacrificial lamb also. This he did quite neatly, saying: "In the Name of God. God is Greatest!"—and Abdurrahmân took some of the meat for our dinner, and left the rest to the

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poor. We then found a barber, who clipped some hair from our heads, and returning to the tent I shed the *ihrâm* with intense satisfaction, and put on the gown and turban.

Over against the Mosque of El Khayf, Bedouin butchers were slaying the Sultân's sacrificial cattle, most of which were young camels. Their manner of doing it was to make the animal couch; and then, having thrown it on its side, one of them drew its head back so that the long throat became taut. Another then drew the knife across its windpipe, low down near to the chest. "The flesh of these will be sweet as a chicken," said Abdurrahmân as he watched these operations.

Later, as we sat in the tent, I asked Abdurrahmân to come with me to join the crowd of Bedouins and Mekkans and *hâjjis* who were streaming from all parts of the valley towards the tent of Ibn Sa'ûd, in order to offer him their congratulations upon the conclusion of the Day of 'Arafa, and the arrival of the Feast of Sacrifices. This proposition he deprecated, saying, "We know nothing of the Mudayyina, nor do we want to know them." Eventually, however, he said he would go with me to the Amîr's tent, and himself remain outside while I entered. Accordingly we made our way to the cope-stoned earthen platform where the tents of the Sharîf of Mekka were formerly pitched at this season. Over the tents which now stood there, flew the green flag of Nejd. Before the entrance of the reception tent stood two black slaves, cloaked and kerchiefed like Bedouins, and armed with Arab swords adorned with massive silver hilts. The visitors streamed into the tent in batches, shook hands with the Sultân, and wishing him a blessed feast, passed out at the

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further side. A few of them kissed him on the forehead, the shoulder, or the back of the hand. Abdurrahmân left me at the tent, and I mingled at once with the crowd of callers, and endeavoured to look as though I belonged to a party of Bokhârans who were among them.

Upon entering the tent, I could at first see very little save the jostling crowd. Soon these dispersed to the sides of the tent, or went out of the further exit, and I saw at the opposite end a number of Bedouins and Mekkans sitting upon chairs and benches arranged in a semi-circle around the side of the tent. In the centre of the curve, flanked by three or four of his military amîrs, sat Abdul Azîz Ibn Sa'ûd. He wore no finery, nor carried any weapon. Over a white linen thawb he wore a simple mishlah, or cloak, of yellow hair-cloth, and on his head a red-and-white cotton kefiya, surmounted by a black hair-rope 'agâl, bound with silver wire. His feet were bare, as he had shed his sandals at the edge of the carpet. He sat with an amiable smile on his face, and wearing black spectacles in order to lessen the effect of the sun-glare. He rose to take the hand of each of his visitors in turn, and returning our salutations and congratulations briefly and smilingly, he then immediately turned his attention to the next comer. This lion of many desert battles, and sovereign lord of more than half Arabia, invariably rises to receive his visitors, whether prince or dervish. On this occasion, there being so large a number of visitors, the names were not announced to him.

Ibn Sa'ûd was at that time (July 1925) some forty-five years of age.* Although considerably over six feet

* His information about his own birthday is rather vague. He was born in "the month of Ramadhân in the year before that in

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in height, he is well and even gracefully proportioned. The features of his long Arab face are large and strong, the mouth somewhat coarse and thick-lipped, the eyes a trifle on the small side. His beard and moustache—the latter cropped short, the former in length a hand's breadth in the Wahhâbî style—are inclined to sparseness. He speaks remarkably well, in an easy well-modulated tone, and uses slight, graceful gestures of the hands. Like many other people of energy, he is frequently very abrupt with his minions when they make mistakes or get in his way. Abdul Azîz is not himself a religious fanatic, but he is an ambitious statesman; and in the latter capacity he does not scruple to make use of religious fanaticism for the purpose of attaining the objects of his ambition. For years he has made it his business to instil into the simple minds of the illiterate Bedu doctrines which will, at a word from himself, cause them to act with an insane disregard of themselves. His personal ambition is boundless, but is tempered by great discretion and caution. He is a relentless enemy while opposition lasts, but in the hour of victory is one of the most humane Arabs in history.

As for his system of rule—he keeps his own counsel even among his relatives, and essentially his rule is absolute. As an instance of his diplomatic play with democracy, I may mention that in Mekka there is an Advisory Council and also a Municipal Council. Half the members of these are appointed by Ibn Sa'ûd himself, and the remainder are, or were at that time, elected by public ballot. The election being over (and

which the fighting occurred between his uncle Muhammad and Ibn Rashid." As far as I could gather, this occurred in 1299 A.H., in which case the Sultan was born in Ramadhân 1298.

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no elected member would be allowed to take his seat unless Ibn Sa'ûd approved of him), the Sultân proceeds to appoint a chairman who holds the casting vote, and thus brings the number of his own nominated members into the majority. Needless to relate, neither of these bodies can enact any law or by-law, or spend more than a few pounds, without the previous sanction of the Ruler. However, the composition of the Councils being what it is, they seldom vex His Highness by presenting to him measures to which he refuses his sanction.*

This despot is known among his Bedouin subjects as El Imâm (the Leader), as El Amîr (the Commander, or Prince), and as Esh-Shuyûkh (which word is the plural of "shaykh"). Among the Ikhwân, or Brotherhood of the Wahhâbîs, he is usually spoken of as "El Imâm," by which they mean "Leader of all the Muslims who are worthy of the name." These intolerant puritans have never recognised any Khalifa† save the

* Since my departure from Mekka even this degree of democracy has been annulled, and Ibn Sa'ûd or his deputy appoints every member of the Councils, and every government servant. The absolute rule of one reasonably strong and just man is quite the most suitable (if not the only possible) for the towns of the Hijâz, whose population is composed of more than a score of differing racial elements devoid of public spirit. The best ambitions of this population are directed, as they most worthily may be, towards life beyond the grave, while their immediate worldly ambitions are concerned with little else than money-grubbing, sensual indulgence, and tawdry display. There is little between these two aspects of their characters.

† The Khalifa (or Caliph) is God's vice-regent on earth, the successor in leadership to the Prophet, the commander of all the Muhammadans in the world. He must be an independent sovereign prince, of religious life, and one who rules according to the precepts of the Shari'a or Islamic Law. The failure of the later Sultans of the House of Othmân to conform to the latter condition (by their adoption of the Napoleonic Code) would have

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ruling member of the House of Sa'ûd. The Sultâns of Turkey were looked upon by them as the leaders of schism.

The foreign minions of Ibn Sa'ûd—Syrians, Egyptians and Irâkis—speak of him as the "Sultân," or at present as "El Malik" (the King). They usually preface the latter title with the word "Jalâla"—Jalâlat el Malik, His Majesty the King. I recall that these same minions have often in my presence spoken scornfully of ex-King Husayn for arrogating to himself the title of Jalâlat el Malik. On such occasions they have asserted that Ibn Sa'ûd would never take such a title, because all greatness (jalâla) belongs to God alone; and because the word "malik" implies possession, and the possession of all things belongs to God alone. "El mulk Lillah wahdah" i.e. "Possession (or kingship) belongs to God alone." That was in the days when we sat uncertainly in Mekka, while Jidda and El Medîna still resisted the Wahhâbî invasion.

The Mekkans, with the exception of such as desire to court his favour, speak of the Sultân briefly as "Es-Sa'ûdi" (i.e. he of the house of Sa'ûd).

Foreign hâjjis usually speak of him as "Ibn Sa'ûd."

In addition to the above forms of title, the Sultân is frequently referred to simply as "Abdul Azîz," but his Levantine minions, coming of races which have evolved flowery forms of address of their own—forms which are neither Arabic nor European—always prefer more formal styles. Kings and emperors are unknown in the patriarchal communities of the Semites, and the true Semitic form of address to an exalted personage is

disqualified them from holding the position of Khalîfa, were it not for the fact that, as in the West so in the East, might frequently transcends right.

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simply "master" or "chief" (in Arabic "sayyid"). It was thus that the followers of Jesus Christ addressed their Leader.

In the afternoon we hired donkeys and went into Mekka, where we performed the Towâf el Ifâdha. Meeting Sabri and Yûsef in the quarter of Bâb el 'Omra, we persuaded them to come out and join us at Mina, where the pilgrims are obliged to remain encamped for three days. It is allowed to the pilgrim to leave Mina during the daytime, but at night he must be there. These three days are termed Iyyâm et-Tashrîq, i.e. the Days of Flesh-drying, because the pilgrims then dry the flesh of their slaughtered beasts as a provision for their homeward journey. Sabri and Yûsef, having no hâjjis to "guide" this year, had not been at 'Arafa for the Hajj. They promised to walk out to Mina in the cool of the evening, and join us.

The Mekkans say that it is considered disgraceful among them for any man to remain in the city during the Pilgrimage; but one rather gathers that in the event of there being no prospect of financial advantage in going to 'Arafa it is not then considered so reprehensible to stay away.

Until quite recently a curious custom prevailed among the women of Mekka. During the period when the hâjjis were encamped at Mina, the women left alone in their houses in the deserted city would dress in male attire, with turbans on their heads and sticks or daggers in their hands, and after dark would issue forth in companies of from four or five to a score. Thus dressed and armed, and without their veils, they would patrol the silent lanes of the deserted city, singing a rhymed song which is too obscene to be set down here. If they met any man in the course of their rambles,

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they would yell their song at him, and all of them hammer him the while with their sticks or their hands. This pretty custom was abolished by order of King Husayn.

We found the Kaaba clothed in its new covering (kiswa). The beautiful silk and wool kiswa with its gold-embroidered band (which is an annual present from Egypt) not having been sent this year, Ibn Sa'ûd had supplied a covering of black Bedouin hair-cloth from El Hasa. Upon this was sewn the tarnished gold band belonging to last year's kiswa.

Having rested, I rode out again with Abdurrahmân to Mina at the hour of el 'asr. Arrived there we found the blood and bones of slaughtered animals strewn about all over the valley, wherever the hâjjis were encamped. On the steep hillside above Mesjid El Khayf a number of Yemeni pilgrims had taken up their quarters among the rocks. Coming from a mountainous country they cannot bear to swelter out the three days of Flesh-drying in the bottom of the valley, but climbing up the nearly perpendicular slopes of the enclosing mountains they soon feel in their native element.

Numbers of hawkers went among the tents selling fruits, sour milk, bread, and other delicacies. Water-sellers with little donkeys, each laden with two small swollen water-skins, also went the rounds.

At each of the five hours of prayer, a small cannon was discharged five times near the tents of the Sultân. At sunset, after stoning (in company with Abdurrahmân) all three of the devils, I went with Shafîg to the mosque of El Khayf. This building is very similar in form to the Mesjid Nimra at 'Arafa. It differs from it in that El Khayf has two minarets, while Nimra has no minaret at all. In the centre of the open quadrangle



THE MOSQUE OF EL KHAYF AT MINA

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is a small dome which covers the spot where the Prophet used to pray. Beside this stands the smaller minaret; the larger one surmounts the gateway, which is in the northern wall. We found the place crowded with hâjjis, who walked or sat about in the walled quadrangle, apparently unaware of its grim secret; for beneath the ground at the western end of this mosque, as Abdurrahmân told me on a later day, lie several great vaults. In the years when the plague strikes Mekka these vaults are opened, and thousands of bodies are stacked in them—"like those your books," said Abdurrahmân, pointing to a pile of books stacked on the floor of my room. He himself had helped to "stack" the poor wretches who perished in the plague of 1326 A.H.

The mosque El Khayf is kept closed all the year except during the Feast of Sacrifices.

In the evening came Sabri and Yûsef, bringing with them a lanky young man named Hasan, who possessed a very pleasant manner and an enquiring mind.

The prospering moon of the eleventh night rose above the black wall which shut in the valley. Against the dark hillside rose the white minarets of the mosque. Our carpets were spread on the sand, and here we sat sipping tea in the cool breeze. The tent stood behind us, flapping gently. About us on all sides were tents of the Mekkans, Bokhârans, and Indians.

I asked Abdurrahmân: "Do the people of Mekka ever come to Mina save in the Hajj?"

"Yes!" he replied. "We sometimes hire one of the houses in Mina, and come here for an excursion of two or three days or a week. But we never come alone, unless it be to pass through by day. At night no man may stay here alone—unless there be with him a party of his friends."

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"Why, O my uncle?" I asked.

"Because of the devils (shayâtîn). There are many devils," he replied darkly.

"Devils!" I said. "How do you know that?"

"Wallah, devils!" he replied, waxing earnest. "You may sit after dark in the houses of Mina, with your tea-pot and finjâns before you, like we are in this moment, and suddenly—ouf!—the lamp will be extinguished and the tea-pot will vanish—gone!—vanished!"

"The tea-pot vanish!" I cried. "Allah Akbar! And after that?"

"After that," said Abdurrahmân with intensity, "you may go down to the door, if you are not afraid, and out into the lane—and there find your tea-pot on the ground, undamaged."

"Billah, tell me!" I said. "Have you ever known one who dared to go down in that darkness and seek for the tea-pot?"

"Go down in the darkness!" echoed Abdurrahmân in horror. "I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned! But the tea-pot was found there in the morning."

Shafîg, Sabri, and Yûsef, looked calmly on in the moonlight. Hasan, with wide eyes, seemed to experience a child's half-fearful fascination for the unknown. Whenever the devils were mentioned they murmured "I take refuge in God."

"And then," I said, "what do you do when the tea-pot disappears?"

"We all say 'I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned,' and after that we talk among ourselves in a loud voice in order to keep away the devils, until we are tired. Then we put down our heads, and draw our coverings over them and go to sleep," said Abdurrahmân.

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"Have you seen the tea-pot disappear?" I asked.

"Yes, by God! Seen it with my eye!" he replied.

"Many people have seen it. Ask Amm Yûsef!"

I looked towards Uncle Yûsef.

"Ay, wallah!" said he, with his grey beard a-wag, "also, if you come to Mina riding upon an ass, God honour you!* and you tie him up for the night in the lane, you may hear his voice braying from the roof as you sit in the first floor drinking tea."

"Amazing!" exclaimed Hasan.

"True! Wallah, true!" said Sabri.

"And then?" I asked, "does one of you go down into the lane to see if the donkey is there, tied up?"

"No!—never!" said the company, half in scorn, half in horror.

"I heard not of one going down. Never!" said Amm Yûsef. "We went up onto the roof to see if the donkey was in the place from which his voice came. That is known."

"Known!" I repeated.

"Known!" murmured the others.

"In truth," said Sabri, his Henry-the-Eighth visage as grave as that of a judge, "in truth, when you hear the donkey's voice coming from the roof, he is there—on top of the roof. But he is mad, and you would not be able to get him down. He is invisible, because of the workings of the devils. You cannot see him. The best thing is to leave him—Not so, Amm Yûsef?—and you go to sleep. The devils will get him down before

* When a Mekkan, addressing another, mentions any animal, he usually adds some such remark as "God honour you." Many of them also do this when they mention a woman. The reason is that when a person is addressing honourable male company he should mention members of the lower classes of creation with diffidence.

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the morning, but he will never again be the same donkey."

"Never!" said Amm Yûsef. "Wallah, madness! madness from the devils."

"Have you seen donkeys of this sort?" I asked.

"Seen them with my eye," said Uncle Yûsef. "You hire one from the donkey-drivers, and see for yourself! And mount upon his back if you are able."

I looked for the gleam of a smile in the old man's eye, but there was nothing there save stern conviction.

"And so," I said, "you do not come to Mina at night?"

"Not at night, alone. Never! Save in a company," said Shafig, "it is a place heavy on one's heart—save in the Hajj."

"Yes!" I said, "and except in the Hajj, it is bare of people—like a dead place; and for miles the ground is strewn with the bones of slaughtered animals. There must have been millions sacrificed here!"

"Animals!" exclaimed Amm Sabri, "*and men!* How many hâjjis lie buried in every part of Mina! By God, *men!* Leave the animals!"

"Ay, wallah, many hâjjis!" said the company softly.

At this they fell to musing; and sitting there beneath the stars I seemed to see the countless shrouded pilgrims who had preceded me in yesterday's thirteen hundred years. Uprisen now, the ghosts of those hâjjis went pressing by. "Labbayk Allahumma! Labbayk!" they cried: "Here am I, O God! At Thy command!" Then out on the road to 'Arafa: out along that narrow track, walled closely on either hand by overhanging crags of trackless rock—home of the carrion vulture, and of bestial half-human apes: on they go, with no shudder of fear at the forbidding strangeness of the

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scene; pressing onward in the moonlight, with words of praise to God on their lips. It seems that they are on the very road to Paradise. One, exhausted, falls, shudders, and dies. Another, with foaming mouth, drops among the feet of the onward moving camels, and, with contorted limbs, shrieks still: "At Thy command, O God! Here am I!" Here a poor wretch, straying a little apart from the crowded track, falls with a robber's knife in his heart, and while the heedless crowds pass on, his poor purse is torn from his neck, and his lifeless body is left to the jackals and vultures.

By God, *men!* Leave the animals!

Suddenly all over the dark valley, faintly tinkling with the tiny sounds of human activities and human voices, there rose the long-drawn chanting of the adân. It was the hour of el 'eshâ. Near to where we sat a Bokhâran began to chant—making havoc of the Arabic words.

"Low ilowhow ilow low," he cried (for "Lâ ilâha ill Ollawh"—There is no god but The God).

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Amm Shafîg, with a pitying grin. "That one is of the people of Bokhâra."

I softly imitated the words of that stolid voice, which seemed to flash into reality the scene, obscure till now, of Gutayba bin Muslim and his Arab hordes fighting their way into the city of Bokhâra in 88 A.H.

Thus, with talk and tea-drinking, the first part of the night passed away, until one by one growing tired; we lay down, and drawing our coverings close about our heads we slept in the silent valley.

We remained two more days at Mina, and on each day we threw seven stones at each of the three Jamras, or Satans. Each of these objects is surrounded by a low circular parapet, which forms a receptacle into which

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the stones fall. After the completion of the Hajj, these stones are gathered up and carried on donkeys to Mekka, where they are strewn like gravel upon the ground within the Haram. It is said that the fanatical wild men of the desert sometimes discharge their guns at the "devils" and yell curses at them, but personally I did not observe any such excesses.

The ceremony of the "stoning" at Mina is supposed to commemorate the circumstances of Abraham's meeting with the devil in this valley on his return from a pilgrimage to 'Arafa. God had commanded the patriarch to sacrifice his son Ismayl (not Isaac, as is recorded in the Book of Genesis). He therefore took him and prepared to obey the command, but in that moment Satan appeared and whispered to him not to carry out his intention. Upon which Abraham, acting upon the suggestion of the angel Gabriel, took up stones and threw them at the devil, in order to drive him away. This occurred at the spot where at present stands El Jamrat el Owla. Then the devil left Abraham, and approaching Hagar, the mother of Ismayl, he endeavoured to enlist her aid in preventing the patriarch from performing the bloody deed. But she also took up stones with which she drove him away. This encounter occurred on the site of El Jamrat el Wustâ. Finally, the devil approached Ismayl himself with similar suggestions, but he, turning upon his tempter at the place where El Jamrat el 'Agaba now stands, also drove him away with stones, and put him finally to rout. A small mosque, known as the Mosque of the Ram, stands on the northern side of the valley of Mina. At this spot Abraham sacrificed the ram as a substitute for Ismayl.

These legends are said to have been current among

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the pagan Arabs, who worshipped a number of idols in the valley of Mina, and stoned the devils there, as the Muslims do to this day. The Muhammadan 'ulemâ affirm that the stoning is intended as a symbol, by the performance of which the pilgrim may strengthen his contempt for the devil and all his works.

The Arabs seem to enjoy expressing their hatred of an abstract idea by stoning a material object. When Abraha invaded the Hijâz and fought the Battle of the Elephant, he was guided by one called Abi Righâl, a Mekkan. His grave is situated near Et-Tâif, and to this day the passing Arabs throw stones at it, in detestation of Abi Righâl's treachery. A little beyond Jarwal, on the road which leads to the Shuhadâ, lies the grave of Abi Lahab, an uncle of the Prophet, and one of his most relentless and bitter persecutors. His name, translated, means "Father of Flames." His grave has received the vindictive missiles of the Arabs for the last thirteen centuries. The Father of Flames has the distinction of forming the sole subject of a Korânic chapter. It is entitled *Abu Lahab*:—

"Let the hands of Abu Lahab perish, and let him perish. His wealth shall not profit him, nor that which he hath gained. He shall suffer the heat of flaming fire. And his wife, bearing firewood, a rope of fibre upon her neck."

Another grave, near the Shuhadâ, which is stoned, is that of Abi Juhayna, who, as Amîr of Mekka, made himself and his memory everlastingly unpopular by reason of his oppressive rule.

Many other cases might be cited, and the traveller in Arabia frequently observes piles of small stones in the desert, denoting sites of stoning.

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Among the Semites capital punishment has frequently taken the form of stoning since the earliest times, and in Islamic law it remains the penalty for adultery to this day. "Advanced" Muhammadan states, such as Turkey and Egypt, which have adopted European codes of law, no longer enforce the Shari'a or religious law, but in Arabia a person convicted of adultery would be put to death in this manner. The offence mentioned is extremely difficult to prove in Islamic law, however, as there must be four witnesses of the act. The capital penalty applies to married men. Unmarried youths receive one hundred stripes of the stick, and an injunction to seek early marriage.

During the last two days of the Flesh-drying, the sickening odour of the decaying remnants of slaughtered beasts made us long to get away to a more wholesome spot.

Soon after midday on the 12th Du-l Hijja, we loaded our camel, which had been led in by its owner during the night, and proceeded on foot by its side down the street of Mina, in order to stone the devils for the last time. This duty having been completed, we mounted into the shugduf. All my companions, save Abdurrahmân, had gone into Mekka on foot before dawn. The Wahhâbîs were in great force, filling the whole of the rock-bound road. Above the horde flew their noble standards—some green, others red—surmounted by shining gilded points, and bearing in white letters the great and simple dogma—"There is no god but The God."

All was of the East. The little stone houses, a few of them with mashrabiya casements; little shops open to the wind and the sun; no wheeled cart; no glazed window; no machines. Nothing but men of the East,

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and camels, and donkeys, and little shops where primitive, unmanufactured products were sold. In distance I was perhaps fifty miles from the outskirts of modern civilisation, but in time I was separated by a thousand years.

At a little distance beyond Mina there is a narrow track which branches to the left from the main road, and, winding behind a hill, passes through the suburb called El Bayâdhîya and rejoins the main road at El Abtah. This track is called Darb el Miskîn—the Poor Man's Road, because it is seldom used by other than pedestrians.

In El Abtah we passed the residence of Ibn Sa'ûd, over which flew the Nejd flag. It is a well-built and spacious mansion, with a walled garden behind it. It belongs to Sayyid Umar As-Sagâf, a wealthy merchant domiciled in Singapore.

Cheerful laughter and greetings rang out on all sides of us from among the crowd of returning pilgrims—happy and care-free now at having safely completed the Hajj.

Passing by El Maala and on through El Gashâshîya, we came into Sûk Es-Saghîr, and a few moments later we dismounted before the Bâb el 'Omra. We were met on the stairs of Abdurrahmân's house by the youth Abdul Fattâh, who hastened to prepare "that which is obligatory," which, in the present instance, took the form of coffee and cigarettes.

XIV

THE MEKKAN'S DAILY LIFE

I NOW informed Abdurrahmân that I proposed to await the termination of the siege of El Medîna in order that I might visit the Prophet's tomb.

There is a divergence of opinion among the Muhammadan jurists as to whether it is better for the hâjji to leave Mekka immediately upon the conclusion of the rites of pilgrimage, or to remain for a space in the Holy City. Every book on Muslim religious practice contains several pages on this subject.

The four orthodox imâms or leaders in matters of law, are Abu Hanîfa, Esh-Shâfi'i, Mâlik, and Ibn Hanbal. These four, being well versed in the Korân and in the Traditions of the Prophet, drew up separate systems of jurisprudence. The four systems do not vary in any fundamental point of belief nor religious duty, and they are, after all is said, no more than "counsel's opinion." The law itself is to be found in the Korân and the Traditions.

The respective followers of the Four Imâms do not constitute, in any sense of the word, separate sects. They believe in the same dogmas, pray in the same mosques, and obey the same laws. Even in the Haram of Mekka, where there is a separate prayer-station for each of the four schools, the Muslims say their prayers in any part of the Mosque in which they happen to find themselves at prayer-time, without discriminating between the imâms who lead them. The only exception

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to this is the case of the Wahnâbîs, who always pray behind their own imâm of the Hanbalî school. Their reason for refusing to mix with other Muslims, in prayer or in social intercourse, is not that they disapprove of the systems of the other three Imâm's, but that they disapprove of the modern followers of those systems, whom they accuse of introducing into the religion extraneous customs and superstitions which, they say, prove them to be polytheists. The act of asking the spirit of Muhammad, and of those of other prophets and saints, to intercede with God in their favour is extremely prevalent among the Egyptians and Syrians, and the Wahnâbîs say that this practice is equivalent to associating Muhammad, or another as the case may be, with God, on an equality. By them it is also asserted that the erection of domes over tombs is a sign that the relatives and friends of the buried person consider that he is as important as God, and must therefore have a mosque built over his grave so that his followers may pray *to him* there. To live in a magnificent house, to dress well, or, in fact, to possess anything which is not found in the desert, is a sign, in the eyes of the ignorant Wahnâbîs, that the owner of such appanages worships not God but Mammon, which is "kufr," i.e. unbelief; or that he worships both God *and* Mammon, which is "shirk," i.e. the associating of other things with God.

The Wahnâbîs are, in fact, puritans. They follow Islâm as Muhammad preached it—almost. While I was in Mekka a meeting was held between the chief 'ulemâ of the four schools, and unanimous agreement was reached on all the matters which were supposed to have been in dispute between the Wahnâbîs and the remainder of the Islamic world. In every instance the

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verdict of the conference agreed with Wakhhâbî practice. The only point in which the Nejders do not follow the Prophet is in their hatred of nearly all modern Muslims save their own community. On account of this one matter it may be truly said that the Wakhhâbîs do constitute a new sect. Ibn Sa'ûd and his diplomatic minions would have it that the Ikhwân do not hate other Muslims, with the exception of individuals whom they have seen performing practices contrary to Islâm; but those who know the Ikhwân are aware that they are far too ignorant to be able to discriminate, even if they wished to do so. Because of their attitude towards other members of their religion they form a separate sect. If one party of men cry "God is One," and they meet another party, different in speech, in dress, and in manners, to themselves, but whose members also cry "God is One," then the two parties, being somewhat fanatical, as most deeply religious people are at heart, may do one of two things. The first of these is that they may disregard the differences of customs, of speech, and of dress, and join fraternally in the united cry of "God is One." That was Muhammad's way. The second is that each may loathe the other and, if they be strong, shun them; or if they be weak, annihilate them. That is the way of the ignorant Wakhhâbîs, and most of the Wakhhâbîs are ignorant.

A Muslim who contravenes the Sunna—the Prophet's example, is no longer a Sunni or orthodox Muhammadan. He becomes a Shî'i or schismatic. Many orthodox Muslims look upon the Wakhhâbîs as being of the latter class, and were it not for the qualities of personal power, of statesmanship, and of public-spirited justice displayed by Abdul Azîz, the whole of the Muslim world would still detest the Wakhhâbîs,

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as they have been detested, until recently, ever since their movement was started by the Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhâb in 1142 A.H. (1729 A.D.).

The Four Imâms differ in such trifling matters as whether it be lawful for a man, after having touched the hand of his wife, to say his prayers without first performing fresh ablutions. The Imâm Esh-Shâfi'i says this is unlawful, while the Imâm Mâlik says it is lawful. All the four are agreed upon the point that one who touches a woman not his wife, nor a relative in the nearest degree of consanguinity, must not say his prayers until he has purified himself by means of fresh ablution. This is one instance among hundreds.

Similarly, in the matter of residence at Mekka: Abu Hanîfa dislikes sojourn in the Holy City, fearing that the sanctity of the Bayt Allah will become as of no account in the eyes of one who beholds it constantly. Familiarity will breed indifference until "veneration will leave his heart completely, and the House of God will become, in his inattentive sight, as the generality of houses."

This was the view held by Umar Ibn El Khattâb, the second Khalîfa, of whom the Mekkan historian Qutb ed-Dîn writes:—

"Umar (may God be pleased with him) used to go round among the hâjjis after the performance of the rites and say—'O People of the Yemen! to your Yemen! O People of Syria! to your Syria! O People of El Irâk! to your Irâk! For verily that [i.e. departure] best makes for the continuance in your hearts of the sanctity of your Lord's House.'"

On the other hand, it was the practice of some of the later Amîrs of Mekka to prohibit the departure of the

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hâjjis for a week or two after the Pilgrimage. This they did in order that the pilgrims might spend their money in the Holy City and thus benefit its inhabitants.

The Imâm Esh-Shâfi'i and the Imâm Ahmad ibn Hanbal both approve of residence at Mekka. They support their opinion by the Prophet's words—"Whoever patiently abides for one hour in Mekka, the fire (of Jehannam) shall be put from him for a period of a hundred years."

It is believed that the reward for good deeds performed in Mekka will be double that awarded for good deeds done elsewhere. Also, it is said that the saints constantly visit the Holy City. The pilgrim hopes that it may be his happy fate to see and converse with one of these.

Qutb ed-Dîn writes:—

"There is no doubt about the coming and going of the saints to her [i.e. Mekka] on the auspicious occasions. And anybody who sees one of them, or is seen by one of them, has attained the greatest happiness. It is said that they attend the Friday prayer-gathering and the honoured occasions, and perform the Hajj every year."

The Muslim saints are credited with possessing strange powers. Some of them, called Ahl el Khatwa—the People of the Footstep—can travel hundreds of miles in a moment of time. Instances are recorded in Arabic history of pious men who were seen praying in the mosque of Bani 'Umayya in Damascus, or in that of 'Amr ibn El 'Aas in Fustât, in the same hour in which they were known to have been present in Mekka. By this it was known that they were wâlîs, or saints, as only saints can be in two places practically at once.

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Wâlis cannot readily be recognised as such by ordinary mortals, and many of them can perform miracles. A true wâli is never ostentatiously pious. He is of humble appearance, does good by stealth, and is scrupulously punctual in all his religious duties. He exudes virtue, and it is a great blessing to a Muslim to associate with a wâli, or even to speak to him, or sit near him. So say the Muslims.

The knowledge that wâlis are not easily to be distinguished is one of the reasons why Muslims, excepting those of the lowest class, and those whose European training has reasoned all the faith and poetry out of them, are so polite and gentle to strangers of their faith. The stranger may be a wâli. No man knows.

Qutb ed-Dîn proceeds:—

“It was the custom of my father (God show him mercy), before he became blind, to hasten to Mekka on the Day of Sacrifice, after stoning El Jamrat el ‘Agaba, and there to sit, facing God’s House, looking attentively about him. He remained sitting there till the sunset prayer. After the sunset prayer he would perform the towâf and the saaya, and return to Mina.

“He used to say—‘Verily God’s saints must of necessity perform the Hajj every year, and do that which is most excellent, namely, perform the Towâf of Visitation on the first day of Sacrifice. Therefore I hasten to go down from Mina on that day, and sit within the Hataym* all day, observing the people performing towâf, in hope that my glance will fall upon one of them [i.e. the saints], or his

* The Hataym is a short semi-circular wall adjacent to the Kaaba. It is described in the next chapter.

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glance fall upon me, and thereby result in my receiving his blessing.'

"He continued this until he became blind. [When that affliction befel him] we used to take him and seat him in the Hataym, for he used to say— 'Though I see them not, yet it may be that their glance will fall upon me, and their blessing result to me.'

"This he continued until he died (God show him mercy).

"Verily God's wâlis hide themselves from men's eyes, so that no one sees them save he whom God has made happy."

No Muslim will deny that the Haram of Mekka is the most "honourable" place on earth, nor that a great blessing accrues to him who dwells there, and a greater still to him who dies there.

The daily routine of a Mekkan is in this wise:—

He is usually awakened, an hour and a half before daylight, by the muaddins chanting the adân from the minarets of the Haram. Only the very religious rise at this hour. These, leaving their mattresses, which are spread on the roofs of their houses, descend to a little stone closet on the floor below, in order to perform their primitive morning toilet. This consists of throwing cold water over themselves, or of merely performing the wudhû—ablution of the face, hands, and feet. A tooth-stick (*miswâk*) is also used. This is cut from the root of a shrub called *arâk*, which grows in some abundance in the Wâdi Honayn near 'Arafa. The end of this stick having been frayed so that its fibres are separated, similarly to the bristles of a small paint-brush, the teeth are rubbed with it. The sap of the

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plant possesses cleansing qualities, and the miswâk very efficiently serves its purpose. Teeth-cleaning is performed before each prayer as a part of the ceremonial ablution.

The mutawwifs very seldom rise in time for morning prayers in the Mosque. Abdurrahmân managed to do this scarcely a dozen times during the whole period of my stay in his house. On several of those occasions he rose in order to pilot me in the towâf. For my own reasons I took an early opportunity to tell him that I had memorised the towâf prayers, and that consequently he need not "guide" me any longer. His expression was one of relief as he heard this announcement. "Praise to God!" said he. In the pilgrimage season, however, the mutawwifs are obliged to rise before dawn in order to attend to their hâjjis.

Having performed his ablutions, the Mekkan puts on his thawb and waist-sash and turban, over the linen trousers and shirt in which he has slept. The upper classes wear a cloth robe over the thawb, and many of the sharîfs wear the Bedouin mishlah.

In most parts of the Muslim world, notably in India, Egypt, and Syria, many contravene the law against wearing silk and gold. In Egypt the 'ulemâ wear more silk than do the members of any other class. In Mekka, I myself frequently wore a silken shawl as a girdle, and this went quite unremarked among the motley population, many of whom wore similar girdles. Some of the Mekkans wear silk turbans, and even jackets of the same material. I was always careful to wear no silk whatsoever whenever I visited Ibn Sa'ûd or any other Wahhâbî. Both gold and silk may be used for embellishing copies of the Korân, but gilt texts, silken drapings, and in fact, any ornaments whatsoever are

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disliked* in a mosque, save the plainest Korânic texts. Beautifully written or embellished texts are apt to distract the mind from the spiritual significance of the words to the excellence of the workmanship. In spite of this, however, there are mosques as magnificently adorned as the most highly decorated Christian churches. The only exception allowed by puritans is in favour of the Kaaba. It shows the fundamental reverence and discernment of the Muslims, that the Kaaba, nevertheless, remained, even in the days of their greatest power and glory, a structure of plain blocks of hewn stone, arranged according to the simplest architectural plan which the mind can conceive.

Descending to the street, the Mekkan makes his way to the Haram, taking off his sandals before entering. Here he joins a row of worshippers, and with them performs the dawn prayer.

After prayers he usually performs the towâf, and then returns to his house. In the meantime his wife or his slave will have been brewing the morning coffee. While drinking a finjân or two of this beverage, he smokes a cigarette. Rising again, after the coffee, he will fetch his turban-shawl, and putting on his sandals, descend to the Sûk es-Saghîr or the Sûk el-Layl in order to buy some bread, and a bowl of beans cooked in samn, for his breakfast. Sometimes he purchases eggs, to be fried in samn by the women, or a kind of sweet pastry called fatîra. Many of the housewives cook the pastry themselves, and also bake their own bread. After eating, the Mekkan takes a draught of water, followed by several little glasses of sweetened tea.

* Makrûh, i.e. not strictly against the Law, but somewhat reprehensible, nevertheless.

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Breakfast concluded, he sits smoking for half an hour or an hour, and discusses domestic matters with his women. He may then go to the sùk, in order to purchase the day's provision of meat and vegetables. He keeps in the house a supply of all the less perishable articles, such as wheat, rice, samn, coffee, charcoal, firewood, and so on. His women grind the flour and mix the dough for making the bread. At some time during the day he will send his son or his slave with the unbaked loaves to an oven-owner (sâhib forn), who will bake them for him.

After returning from the market, the Mekkan sweeps out his mag'od or sitting-place, which is usually a small room on the ground floor, or is a raised platform at one side of the entrance hall. The mag'od in Abdurrahmân's house was a room, six feet wide by fifteen feet long, raised in the manner of a theatre-box, five feet above the beaten earth floor of one side of the entrance hall. The floor of the mag'od was of wooden beams covered with earth, beaten hard. The room was furnished with an unglazed window—there is practically no glass in Mekka—protected by iron bars, which looked into the narrow lane in which the house stood. The inside partition of the mag'od was also formed of a succession of iron bars, surmounting a wooden paneling some eighteen inches high. The space beneath the mag'od, which was also enclosed by a partition, was used as an occasional stall for donkeys, and a perpetual receptacle for rubbish.

The sewerage system of Mekka is primitive. A large and deep hole is dug in the street before the house, and the refuse conduit is led to it. The hole is then covered over with beams and planks of timber, over which a layer of earth is spread. When it becomes full of filth,

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certain poor scavengers are hired to open the hole and empty it. They scoop up the refuse and place it in pannier baskets on the backs of donkeys. They then drive out beyond the Haram limits in order to empty the baskets.

Having swept his mag'od, and rearranged the cushions with which it was furnished, Aburrahmân would pour fresh water into a shîsha which stood in the room. He did not smoke the shîsha himself, but kept it for his friends.

Having made these preparations, he would sit down to roll a cigarette, and to await the arrival of his cronies. Presently these would enter the door, singly or in couples, and climb the half a dozen steps which led up to the mag'od. Amm Shafîg, whose house faced ours on the opposite side of the lane, would usually drop in first, followed by Sabri, who lived two doors further down, Amm Yûsef from Sûk es-Saghîr, Hasan from Hârat el Bâb, Abd esh-Shukûr from Jebel Hindi, and others. Sometimes the meeting would be held in the house of another, but among his own coterie Abdurrahmân's house was usually the meeting place. Here they sat talking and smoking, drinking water, and (on occasional days) tea, until the adân was heard calling to the midday prayer.

Frequently Abdurrahmân went to Sûk el-Layl, in order to attend the daily sale of carpets and other household articles which was held there. This mart was known as "el Harâj." Thence the merchants would send out dallâls, or criers, who carried the articles which it was desired to sell by auction. Passing quickly through the lanes and markets, these running brokers would display their wares to anybody who beckoned to them, and inform him of the amount of

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the highest bid so far received for each article. Should a prospective purchaser bid higher, the dallâl must remember him and the amount of his offer, until he in turn is outbidden by somebody else. Finally, the dallâl returns to his employer and tells him of the best bid he has received; or, if he has been given a reserve price by the merchant, he will sell without again referring to his principal.

Anything is sold in this way. I have seen dallâls riding about the town on horses and donkeys which they were endeavouring to sell, and others running along with silk scarves, daggers and carpets. The best of the slave girls are also given into the hands of dallâls. They do not carry these poor creatures round with them, but they secure prospective customers whom they conduct to the houses of the girls' owners, where they may be inspected. There are dallâls who specialise in this branch of the business, and who know a number of people who are always prepared to bid for a girl who may strike them as being a desirable addition to their harîms. During my time in Mekka it was an understood thing among these dallâls that the first person to whom any girl of youth and beauty, who came into the market, was to be offered, was Ibn Sa'ûd. They looked upon this as a standing order. Presumably, the Sultân was at that time engaged in forming a new harîm, having left most of his own women behind in his former capital, Er-Riâdh.

At this time, the failure of the Hajj as a paying proposition, by reason of the war, had reduced to comparative poverty many Mekkans who had formerly been fairly wealthy. The consequence of this was that many valuable Oriental carpets, and much other property, were put up for sale and disposed of at a

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fraction of their true value. It would have been quite possible, at that time, to have purchased, for a hundred pounds or so, an assortment of beautiful Persian carpets, which, in Europe, could have been sold for quite a thousand pounds.

Upon Abdurrahmân's return from the Harâj, he would sit in the mag'od and relate to whomsoever might be present the wonderful bargains which were waiting to be picked up in Sûk el-Layl.

Sometimes, though rarely, the cronies would go to the Haram to perform the midday prayer. More usually they broke up their gathering at the sound of the adân, and retired to their own houses. If they happened to sit a few moments longer over an argument they would remain where they were until after prayers, for anybody seen in the street while prayers were in progress in the Mosque was liable to be soundly beaten with sticks by Ibn Sa'ûd's black slaves.

Some of the Mekkans never prayed in the Haram, excepting only at sunset, unless they happened to find themselves there at the moment at which the call to prayer sounded. At the sunset prayer-time nearly every man in Mekka was present in the Haram, and without the Mosque walls the city was deserted.

One of the reasons why the Mekkans did not worship in the Haram more was their hatred of the Wahhâbîs, whom they accused of altering the form of the service.

There is a difference of opinion among the Four Imâms as to whether it is compulsory to pray in congregation. Ibn Hanbal (who is followed by the Wahhâbîs) says that it is compulsory. The other three imâms allow that prayers said in private have some value. All four are agreed that prayers said in congre-

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gation are the more efficacious. The above remarks apply to "fardh" prayers—the five daily performances of compulsory prayer.

After midday the Mekkan ascends to his private quarters and rests, or talks with his women, until the hour of el 'asr. This is the dinner hour. In our house, Abdul Fattâh would bring a great brass tray down to my room, where we dined, together with any guest who might have been invited. The tray was placed upon a small wooden stool, about a foot in height, and upon this the dishes were set. Dinner consists of a large dish of boiled rice, sometimes mixed with lentils, over which samn is poured; a dish of stewed sheep's or goat's flesh, with a few added tomatoes and onions; and a dish of vegetables—either vegetable marrow, cut into small cubes; spinach; mulûkiya, a species of mallow; badinjân—the black-skinned fruit of the egg plant; or bâmia—a thin tapering leguminous pod. The last is of a pale green colour, and is some three inches long, and three-fifths of an inch thick at its base. Each diner is provided with a disc-shaped loaf of bread, which is hollow or pouch-like. Saying "bismillah," he breaks off pieces of this, and with their aid scoops up meat, gravy, or vegetable—using his right hand only. Metal spoons are provided with which to eat the rice. Taking a little gravy, or vegetable, or meat in his spoon, the diner mixes it into the rice at his side of the dish and eats, renewing the supply of gravy or vegetable from time to time. The Mekkans like to finish simultaneously with those who eat in their company, and then, saying "el hamdu Lillah!" they drink a copious draught of water from a metal cup, which is filled from the porous clay shirba. Frequently the shirbas are perfumed with the smoke of burning sandal-

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wood or incense. After drinking, each goes outside the room to the bathing-place, where he washes his hands and mouth with soap and water, pouring the latter from a small clay jar, called *ibrîg*, which has a spout similar to that of a tea-pot.

After the ablutions, Abdul Fattâh would bring down from the upper floor a brass samovar, together with a tea-pot and *finjâns*, and two receptacles containing tea and sugar respectively. Cigarettes are rolled, and smoked with the tea, and the members of the gathering pray independently the prayer of el 'asr between the refilling of the *finjâns*, or on the completion of the tea-drinking.

Here they sit talking until, perhaps, an hour before sunset, when suddenly a voice is heard, in the lane below, of another crony calling Abdurrahmân to descend. This is the signal for everybody to swathe his turban-cloth about his head, and rise. The Mekkans usually unwind their turbans when sitting in their houses, and sit with nothing on their heads save the linen skull-cap.

Everybody assumes his cloth jubba, or else a short thin jacket, and then they go downstairs in order to join the new arrival. In the cold weather the company will now sit again in the *mag'od* until the sunset prayer, when they go to the Haram, and again upon their return until near midnight. In the hot season they will frequently go to one of the coffee-houses in the outskirts of the city, instead of going to the Haram. Usually they went through *Sûk es-Saghîr* and the *Misfala*, exchanging greetings right and left with acquaintances as they went, to a coffee-house at *Birkat Mâjid*. Here there is a small patch of cultivation—durra and *birsîm*, with a few palm, *sidr*, and *ithl* trees. This

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cultivation is only some quarter of a mile long by a hundred and fifty yards wide, but here in the hollow, among towering masses of rock, the sweet greenery gave to the eye a feeling of refreshment. There is a large water-tank here, some seventy feet long by sixty feet broad. This receives the surplus water from 'Ayn Zubayda. It is less than half a mile outside Mekka, beyond the extremity of the Misfala.

Here the rocky hillside had been dug into the form of rough terraces, upon which stood benches and small wooden tables. Entering the coffee-yard, Abdurrahmân and his companions mount to the topmost terrace, and seat themselves in the airiest position. The coffee-house keeper brings a little tin coffee-pot full of coffee, and a handful of finjâns. One by one he half fills the latter with the beverage, handing them round to the sitters. A shîsha could be hired here for a farthing or so, and Amm Yûsef regularly handed out his pinch of dry tobacco to the coffee-server, who then prepared the pipe for him. A clay water-bottle was placed upon the table, together with a small tin can which served as a drinking-cup.

At sunset, everybody having performed ablutions, all the customers, together with the coffee-server and his assistant, assembled in a special place spread with reed-matting, on the lower terrace, and repeated prayers.

After this they sit talking in the cool evening air, the sky above them ablaze with stars. Thus it was on the occasion of my first visit to Birka with them, and this is how the evening proceeded:—

“O Tahsîn!” called Abdurrahmân to the coffee-server. “Bring your hand!”

Tahsîn, grimy but smiling, falls up the rough steps

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from the lower terrace, and receives from Abdurrahmân a little paper packet of tea, which has been purchased on the way down Sûk es-Saghîr. Presently he returns with a tea-pot and finjâns, all of which he places upon the table. Abdurrahmân produces a paper packet of sugar, which he empties into the tea-pot.

Talk has died down for a moment. Out of the shadows to westward a breeze comes across the valley, stirring the lote, palm, and tamarisk trees. My gaze falls on young Hasan's face. He is watching the low-hanging moon. A nice youth, Hasan—cordial and kind. Amm Yûsef and Amm Shafîg are bubbling their shîshas and emitting slow streams of smoke from their mouths—contemplatively. Amm Abdurrahmân rolls a cigarette with care. Sabri hums a tune, no louder than the wind. Suddenly Hasan speaks.

"Which is the brighter," he says to me; "your moon in Damascus, or this our moon?"

Everybody awaits my reply with lazy interest. Shafîg makes as though to speak, but thinks better of it.

"The moon is one," I replied. "This moon which we see here is the same moon which the Syrians see, and the Egyptians, and the Indians, and all the world."

Hasan looked serious, but would make no comment. He was unconvinced: I had given him no proof.

"We had two hâjjis from Esh-Shâm in the past year," said Shafîg, between the whiffs of his shîsha, "and while they were with us there happened an eclipse of the moon. The call to prayer was chanted for the prayer of eclipse,* and the two Shâmis went to the

* Solât el Khusûf—a special prayer decreed to be performed when the moon is eclipsed. Similarly Solât el Kusûf—for an eclipse of the sun.

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Haram with the other people in order to pray. When they arrived at the Haram, the one said to the other, 'Then is our moon in Esh-Shâm eclipsed, O my brother?'

"'No, wallah!' said the other. 'The prayer is for the moon of Mekka.'

"'Good!' said the first man. 'Then I do not intend to pray just because the moon of Mekka is eclipsed. That is the Mekkans' matter. I am a Shâmi, and if our moon in Esh-Shâm is not eclipsed, by the life of thy beard I do not pray.' And upon that he left the Haram."

Our company all laughed at this, excepting Hasan. He had evidently not yet fathomed the matter. At the outset, I think, Shafîg was the only one-moon man. All the rest had been for plurality. But they were quicker to understand Shafîg's attitude and opinion than was Hasan.

I liked Hasan, and I thought I would try to convince him of the moon's unity. To attempt to convince a bigoted Muslim by science without religion was hopeless.

"In the Enlightening Book,"* I told him, "we find Chapter *The Moon*. Had there been more than one moon, would not this have been called Chapter *A Moon* or Chapter *The Moons*?"

Hasan smiled a sudden glorified smile of perfect belief.

"True!" said he. "Wallah, true, Hâjj Ahmad!"

Then he commenced to chant from memory Chapter *The Moon*:—

"'The last hour approacheth, and the moon is split asunder . . .'"

* The Korân.

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The others murmured together. "Wallah true! The moon, he is one."

If you would change the opinion of an old-fashioned Muslim on any such point as this, you may best do so by giving him evidence from the Korân or the Traditions. You may hardly accomplish your object in any other way.

On another evening as we sat in the coffee-yard at Birka, Hasan said: "The moon has not yet risen. It is still below the earth."

"We neither know whether it is below the earth or above the earth, O my little son!" said Uncle Yûsef decisively. "No one knows that save He, and He knows all things."

"Praise to Him!" murmured the sitting company, softly.

"Some of them say that verily the earth is round," said Sabri.

"I take refuge in God!" said Abdurrahmân, and added. "When I was a little one at school—that Turkish school which used to be on Jebel Hindi—the schoolmaster taught us geography . . ."

"A Turk, not so?" interrupted Sabri.

"A Turk," Abdurrahmân assented. "And he used to teach the students that the earth is round."

"I take refuge in God!" exclaimed Tahsîn the coffee-server, who, in passing, had stopped to hear the tale.

Hasan sat silent, his eyes seeking earnestly about the lips of Abdurrahmân for further speech.

"When the teacher came to the matter of the earth's roundness," proceeded Abdurrahmân, "wallah, I put my fingers into my ears . . . and so I never was taught that cursed lie."

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All nodded, gravely approving. Abdurrahmân had done the right thing.

"The earth—she is a flat plain," said Amm Shafîg, "with mountains around her edges. Not so, Amm Yûsef?"

But Amm Yûsef, an old man now, had seen many great truths shattered into oblivion by steam and electricity. He had travelled in Turkey and in Southern Europe.

"We know not," said he. "God is More Knowing."

As they sat murmuring praise to Him who is All-knowing, I pondered as to how they might become convinced that the earth was not flat. They believed that there were a series of earths disposed as in layers, one above the other. Then I reflected that they were fortunate in believing something, no matter though it were incorrect. They were in no doubt. If I could not convincingly prove to them the truth of the earth's roundness, then it was better for all of us that I should say nothing. I could recall no verse of the Korân to meet the need, and nothing short of Korânic proof would have been adequate.

Nevertheless, there is Korânic proof of this, as it was received as an acknowledged fact by many of the learned as early as the fifth century of the Hijra. In a book by El Ghazâli in manuscript, which I saw in the library at Mekka, the earth is stated to be spherical.

* * * * *

Sometimes our coterie went to a coffee-house in the Jarwal quarter, where the road passes by to Wâdi Fâtima, or they foregathered in the house of Shafîg, or in that of Hasan.

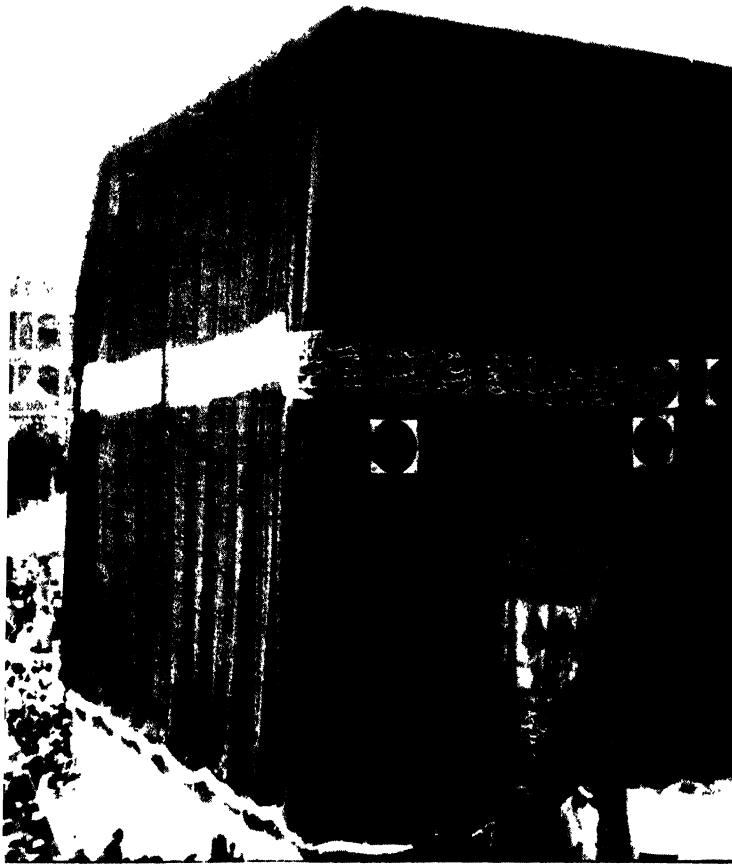
Before the Wahhâbî occupation they were in the

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habit of frequenting the Hashîsh-smokers' coffee-house near El Maala, but as this lay on the road between Mekka and the house of Ibn Sa'ûd it was always liable to be entered by passing Wahhâbîs, and consequently smoking was out of the question there. Therefore the smoking fraternity no longer patronised it.

Shortly after the hour of el 'eshâ (about eight o'clock in the evening, or a quarter past one by Arabic time) our party would leave the coffee-house and saunter homeward. Arrived at his house the Mekkan eats a little supper of fruit, or bread and sweetmeat, or the cold residue of the afternoon meal, and then he mounts to the roof, accompanied by his wife or one of his wives, to sleep.

There were two sections of roof to Abdurrahmân's house, one of which was on a higher plane than the other. My host occupied the upper roof, and I had the lower one. Here I slept close under the stars. Our house was one of the highest of those which surrounded the Mosque, and by looking through a small aperture in the eastern wall of my roof I could obtain a view of the Haram below.



THE KAABA WITH THE DOOR OPEN

The Shaybī is sitting on the threshold.

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XV

DESCRIPTION OF THE KAABA

SOON after sunrise on the second day after the return from 'Arafa, Abdul Fattâh came into my room and informed me that the Kaaba was open.

The key of the House is kept by the Shaykh of the family of Bani Shayba, and has been in the care of the successive heads of that family since pre-Islamic times. The name of the present shaykh is Abdul Câdir Esh-Shaybi, and he alone may open the door of the Bayt Allah. Abdul Fattâh once informed me that the lock would refuse to turn if the key was inserted by anybody save the Shaybi. This old gentleman, having opened the door, sits aloft on the threshold, and takes toll of those who would enter. I never saw anybody enter without payment save the Wahhâbîs, and I have no doubt that the fees of those puritans were paid to the Shaybi, directly or indirectly, by their diplomatic Sultân.

Accompanied by Abdul Fâtâtâh, I descended to the Haram, and leaving my sandals in the care of one of the old women who sit near the Kaaba, I joined the struggling horde which swayed and heaved before the door of the House. The crowd was well seasoned with Wahhâbî, and was consequently very active. On the marble pavement of the Matâf, below the door of the Bayt Allah, stood two black slaves belonging to the Shaybi. These were doing their best to keep the crowd from achieving its evident object of scaling the wall

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and swarming over the threshold. One of them removed a small ladder, by the aid of which the aged Shaybi had mounted to the door, and passed it over the heads of the crowd, to one of the eunuch servants of the Mosque, so that the hâjjis should not make use of it to rush the door. The beautiful green veil, embroidered with silver and gold, hung in its place before the door, and at intervals it was drawn aside in order to allow of the entrance or egress of devotees. Behind this veil the door of the Kaaba stood open, and on one side of the threshold the grey-bearded Shaybi squatted, while at the other side stood two of the younger members of his house.

I looked round once to seek Abdul Fattâh, but I failed to find him. A slight youth, he had found himself unable to force his way through the crowd.

For some moments I made no effort to reach the door of the Kaaba, but swayed passively with the multitude in order to observe what was happening. I noticed that the Wahhâbîs mounted on one another's shoulders, and scrambled over the threshold as though they were breaking into a desert fort. Some of the foreign hâjjis and poor dervishes endeavoured to imitate their example. These were ruthlessly pushed down by the youths on the threshold, or pulled back by the slaves below. I observed, however, that those who, as they pushed their way forward, held out a serious piece of money met with no repulse, but were allowed to enter unopposed.

A memorable scene was this at the Navel of the World. Multitudes of hâjjis performing towâf panted round the base of the huge black-draped cube; while before the door surged that eager crowd composed of elements from many nations. Round about stretched

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the cloisters and walls of the Haram. Beyond, on every side, the houses of Mekka rose in tiers—closely packed upon the lower slopes of the barren hills—overlooking the open quadrangle. Above the house-tops the stark mountain peaks stood, and over all blazed the sun.

With some difficulty I extracted a mejîdi from the fold of the silken shawl about my waist, and held it out above my head towards the guardians of the door. At once one of them stretched out his hands to me, took my hand with the mejîdi in one of his, and started to pull me up. As I struggled to the threshold, the second youth placed one of his hands under my left arm, and he too helped me to scale the wall. I had begun to feel that I was as good as inside the House, when suddenly a great claw was laid upon my back, and another grasped my left leg. I was being pulled back to earth again, but still I struggled to get over the threshold, and still the Shaybi's youths hauled upon my arms.

"Let him be!" ordered one of the youths. "His money is with us."

At that magic word the slave below relaxed his grip, and I stumbled breathlessly to my feet on the floor of the Kaaba.

"This is whom?" asked the Shaybi somnolently; but I was performing the prostration in honour of the Bayt Allah.

I rose, and was in the act of walking into the pitch-dark interior of the House, when a man joined me—unseen but felt.

"Are you from Egypt?" he asked.

"From Syria," I replied briefly.

Three more hâjjis coming in at the door stumbled against us in the darkness. The chamber was full of

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incense-smoke, and stifling with heat. We moved towards the south-western side, bringing up close to the wall.

"This is the Prophet's Prayer-Niche," said my companion. "Money here!"

As he said this, he held up his open hand, and I saw, lying in the palm, a coin shining in the dim light. This was evidently his way of expressing himself. Having, doubtless, been frequently misunderstood by non-Arabic-speaking *hâjjis*, it had become this man's custom to accompany the word "*filûs*" with the display of a coin. I do not know who the man was, but I presume he was another of the Shaybi's "youths." I gave him five piastres, and then proceeded to perform a prayer of two prostrations in the Prophet's Prayer-Niche.

This being completed, my invisible guide, holding me by the sleeve, conducted me to the Northern Corner (Er-Rukn esh-Shâmi). Here there is, as it were, a tiny room built within the corner of the Kaaba. It is only some three feet square, and it contains the stairs which lead to the roof. The *hâjjis* are not admitted to this little chamber. It is fitted with a door, before which hangs a magnificent veil, similar to that which adorns the outer door. This spot is called *Bâb et-Towba* (The Door of Repentance).

"This," said my unseen guide, "is *Bâb et-Towba*. Piastres here!"

I gave him a couple of piastres, and prayed a prayer of two rak'as. After the prostrations, my guide said aloud a prayer of repentance of our sins, followed by a supplication for their forgiveness. This I repeated after him.

We went next to the centre of the north-eastern

DESCRIPTION OF THE KAABA

wall, which is that in which the door of the Kaaba is situated.

"This," said my companion, "is the Wall of the Door. Two prostrations here—and a little money!"

Finally, we stood at the middle of the south-eastern wall. My guide now left me to myself, instead of firmly leading me to the door. The latter was the fate of most of the hâjjis, and they were, naturally, unable to make any protest, still less any resistance, in so sacred a place.

Finding myself alone, I went round the walls, rubbing the palms of my hands on them. This the pilgrims do in order to anoint themselves with the virtue believed to be exuded by those holy stones.

A peculiar state of mind was induced by the thought of the associations of this long-venerated spot. To this was added a subconscious memory of the secret planning, the pleasures and the hardships, the years of application, of which this was the culminating hour.

I was able, without arousing suspicion, to observe closely all that the Kaaba contained. I was greatly hampered, however, by the complete darkness of the unventilated Temple. Only when the veil of the door was drawn aside in order to let out or to admit the hâjjis could I see anything at all. The heat of the incense-laden atmosphere was very great.

The floor of the Kaaba is raised by a single step of eight or nine inches above the level of the threshold; while the threshold itself is raised nearly seven feet above the pavement of the Matâf. Both the floor of the House and the threshold are of white marble, in which are a few dark veins. The interior walls are also lined with slabs of this stone. Up to a height of four feet from

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the floor these are undecorated, with the exception that let into each of the four walls there are one or two panels, also of marble, bearing chiselled records of the various repairs which have been carried out on the Bayt Allah at different times, together with the names of the princes by whose orders these repairs were done. A mosaic tablet in the south-eastern wall bears the words "Allah" and "Muhammad" chiselled in an oblong centre-piece of alabaster, which is surrounded by a rough design of angular form in red and white marbles. From a height of some four feet above the floor the marble panelling of the Kaaba is carved in the form of a frieze of a rough acanthus design in raised relief. This decoration extended upwards to at least the point, some eight feet above the floor, at which the walls became obscured by hanging draperies of rich red silk. Ordinarily these drapings hang down to the floor and completely conceal the walls, but whenever the Kaaba is opened to visitors they are drawn up by means of cords, so as to be preserved from the touch of the hâjjis. The ceiling was also draped with sheeny silken hangings of a red material.

The roof of the Kaaba is carried on wooden beams, supported by three columns of knotted brown wood. These columns, which taper slightly, appear to be perfectly straight tree-trunks from which the bark has been stripped. They are not planed, and they bear no decoration save a protective casing or panelling of woodwork, which extends to a height of six feet from the floor. The diameter of these columns at the point immediately above the top of the panelling is about a foot.

They extend in a straight line across the chamber from south-east to north-west, and are equidistant

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from the Wall of the Door and the south-western wall. The first column which is met with upon entering is situated opposite the south-eastern wall, at the distance of one-third of the chamber's length. The third column is situated very close to the north-western wall, being at a distance of only one yard from it, probably because it helps to support the staircase which leads to the roof. The middle column is equidistant from the first and the third, and is in a straight line with them. Extending between the columns, at a height of twelve feet from the floor, is a horizontal wooden beam from which hang a large number of silver lamps and incense burners of differing sizes and shapes. Some of these objects may have been of gold, but I was unable to satisfy myself on that point, by reason of the lack of light. A number of the incense-burners were alight, and were emitting wreaths of sweet suffocating smoke. Perspiration streamed down my face, and breathing was difficult.

To the left of the door of the Kaaba stood an octagonal object, either a coffer or a table, of carved wood, two feet high and of the same measurement from side to side. It was covered with a green silk cloth, and upon it lay the embroidered silken bag in which the Shaybi keeps the key of the House.

The door of the Kaaba is of massive carved wood, heavily plated with silver. At present the side-posts of the doorway are somewhat decayed at their bases, where also the silver plating is in bad repair.

I had now seen all that it was possible for me to see; and the hâjjis, flocking in from the by-ways of the city at the news that the Kaaba was open, seemed to be constantly increasing the press of humanity within that confined space. I made my way to the door, and

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dropping a couple of coins into the outstretched hands of the Shaybi's youths, I was able to pass out amongst a party of Bokhârans, and slither down to the pavement beneath. For a moment I was dazzled by the blinding sunlight, and feeling many clutching hands about my person, I thought for a moment that I must have made myself unpopular in some way. As my eyes became accustomed to the strong light, however, I found that a mob of ragged beggars and unclean dervishes were anxious to become more closely acquainted with me. They crowded round me, and rubbed their hands on mine; they drew their hands down my back, my chest, and my arms, and then rubbed them on their own faces, and over their limbs and breasts. All the while they uttered prayers and praise to God, mixed with greetings and congratulations to me—shaking and kissing my hands the while. These poor people, having no money with which to fee the Shaybi, were obliged to content themselves with a little of the Kaaba's virtue borrowed at second hand from more fortunate pilgrims.

Abdul Fattâh joined me on the outskirts of the crowd.

"May Allah accept your visitation," said he.

The Kaaba is opened to men on seven fixed occasions during the year, and to women on seven others. In addition to these occasions, it used to be opened on several nights in the year in order that the Sharîf of Mekka might say a special prayer within for the Khalîfa. There being no Khalîfa at present, this practice is in abeyance. The interior of the House is also washed on the 20th of Rabî' el Awwal, and on the 20th of Du-l Giada. On these occasions it is washed six times with ordinary water, and then receives a seventh

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washing with rose-water. The Muslims consider it a very blessed proceeding to drink water which has been used for this purpose. After one of these washings, old Hasan, the Zemzemi, offered me a little bowl of the rose-water which had been used. I drank it hardily, but wished I had left the Haram by another gate, and so avoided the old man's kindness.

The Kaaba is also opened when its covering is changed, and frequently during the Hajj season, in order to give as many hâjjis as possible an opportunity to enter.

On the 28th of Dul-l Giada the lower part of the covering is cut off to a height of eight feet, and a length of white calico is sewn on in its place. This practice seems to be done by the Shaybi merely in order that he may sell a part of the kiswa to the hâjjis. It is his custom to do this some ten days before the Pilgrimage, so that his agents may have plenty of time in which to sell the pieces of fabric. Were he to wait until the 10th of Du-l Hijja, on which date the old covering is exchanged for the new, the hâjjis, having completed their pilgrimage, would pay little attention to souvenir-buying, in their eagerness to return to their own countries. During the ten days preceding the Hajj, vendors of little pieces of the old kiswa are to be seen squatting on the marble pavement outside Bâb es-Salâm.

The Kaaba is said to have been first clothed by the followers of the Himyarite king Abu Karb Asad, in 390 A.D. They dressed the Temple (which at that time housed the idols of the Pagan Arabs) in a covering of striped hair-cloth. Subsequently it became the custom of several of the tribes to supply the covering by turns, putting each new one on over the old one. Probably the only occasions upon which the rotting mass was

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removed were when the Kaaba itself was damaged by floods and required repairing.

The fact that the Prophet clothed the Kaaba consecrates that act as an Islamic rite, and ever since his death the Khalîfas or other princes have carried out this duty annually, or more frequently. In 160 A.H. the Abbaside Khalîfa El Muhdi ordered the removal of the accumulated mass of ancient coverings, and since that time it has been the custom to remove the old kiswa annually before the new one is put on. After the fall of the Abbaside Dynasty of Bagdad, the kiswa was sent to Mekka by the Imâms of the Yemen or the Sultâns of Egypt. Finally Egypt alone became responsible for this, and remains so to the present day. The Egyptian kiswa is made of a thick black material—a mixture of silk and wool. About the upper part, so that it encircles the Kaaba at some fifteen feet below the top of the parapet, is a handsome belt, two feet broad, which consists of Korânic texts beautifully worked in gold-plated silver wire. In addition to the kiswa, the following articles are sent:—

1. The veil of the door.
2. The veil of the Door of Repentance.
3. The bag for the key.
4. The covering for the Makâm Ibrâhîm.
5. The covering for the door of the pulpit.

The above articles are not all sent annually, but whenever one of them shows signs of wear the Amîr of the Pilgrim Caravan reports the matter in Cairo on his return, and a new one is sent with the next year's caravan.*

* The Egyptians, in consequence of a dispute which occurred, in 1926, between the Egyptian Caravan and the Wahhâbîs, discontinued the old custom of sending the covering for the Kaaba. Ibn Sa'ûd has now (1928) engaged weavers to make the kiswa in Mekka, and the belt is embroidered in India.

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The Kaaba measures some forty feet in length by thirty-three feet in breadth,* and in height, including the topmost part of the walls, which forms a parapet round the edge of the roof, is some fifty feet. It is firmly and massively built of the fine Mekkan granite, while the roof, which is sunk a distance of two and a half or three feet below the top of the walls, is of a greyish-white marble. The foundations of the Kaaba are reinforced by a sloping bulwark of marble, which is built into the angle formed by the wall of the House and the ground, on all its four sides. It varies somewhat in size on each of the four sides. On the north-western side it is a foot thick at its base, and about eighteen inches high, while on each of the remaining three sides these measurements are transposed, becoming approximately as follows—thickness at base, eighteen inches; height, one foot. This bulwark is called Esh-Shâzirwân. It presents a smooth polished surface which slopes downward at a sharp angle until it is within eight inches of the ground. From this point it is perpendicular. The Shâzirwân may be compared in miniature with the line of putty which is pressed into the angle formed by the window-frame and its sheet of glass. In this manner the Shâzirwân fits into the angle at the base of the Kaaba. Its use is doubtless to reinforce the foundations against the advent of floods. There is a gap in the Shâzirwân opposite to the door. The sloping surface is fitted with a series of brass rings, forty-eight in number, to which the cords of the covering are tied. Similar rings are fitted to the inner side of the roof parapet. The kiswa does not cover the roof, but only the four walls of the Kaaba.

* Neither the two opposing long walls nor the two opposing short ones are exactly similar in length.

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The House possesses but one door at the present time. This is situated in the north-eastern wall at a distance of six feet from the "corner of the Black Stone," and is raised between six and seven feet above the ground. The door itself is over six feet high. Formerly a second door existed in the south-western wall, but this was closed in the first century of Islâm by El Hajjâj ibn Yûsef Eth-Thagafi.

In the middle of the parapet, high up in the north-western wall, is a small aperture at the level of the roof. Through this aperture there protrudes a massive rain-water spout of solid gold, called El Mîzâb or Mîzâb er-Rahma (The Water-spout of Mercy). In shape it resembles a long narrow trough, square in section, seven or eight inches wide, and nearly four feet long. At its end a flat piece of metal protrudes vertically downwards, and a row of spikes extends along the upper edges of its two sides. The latter addition was probably supplied in order to discourage the pigeons of the Haram from settling upon the Mîzâb, and thereby, in course of time, loosening it. The gold water-spout was presented by the Turkish Sultân Abdul Majîd in the middle of last century (1270 A.H.)

In the eastern corner of the Kaaba, at a height of nearly five feet from the ground, the Black Stone is embedded. The Arabs attribute a fabulous origin to this object, and they believe that it was first placed in the Kaaba by Abraham. It is probably an aerolite which flashed through the atmosphere and fell in the vicinity of an encampment of Arabs, who took it up fearfully, and made of it, if not their God, at least an object of extreme reverence. At the time of Muhammad's birth it was one of the many idols in the Kaaba, and he himself retained it, as it was considered to have

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been given to man by God, to be a token round which they might gather and praise Him in universal brotherhood. Some say that it contains the document bearing God's covenant with mankind. The Muslims believe that the Stone was originally white, but that it became black in consequence of being touched and kissed by sinners. It is not black, but is of a dark red-brown colour approaching in places to blackness. Its visible face is roughly circular, being some ten inches in diameter, and it is set in a massive silver mounting. It is deeply embedded in the wall of the Kaaba, but its length appears to be unknown, and unrecorded in writings, at the present time. The outward face of the Stone is worn down to such an extent, or is set so deeply in the metal mounting, that when he kisses it the pilgrim's face is completely hidden in the orifice.

It is incorrect to say, as some writers have done, that the Muhammadans worship the Black Stone. Before kissing this object the Prophet, addressing it, said: "Verily I know that thou art but a stone. Thou canst do no harm, neither canst thou confer advantage." Abu Bakr and Umar, the first and second Khalifas, in similar case said the same words, and added: "And if I had not seen God's Messenger (God bless and give him peace) kiss thee, neither would I have kissed thee."

In the year 317 A.H. a community of Arabs of Bahrayn, known as the Carmatites, invaded Mekka in the season of the Hajj, and having killed thirty thousand of the Muslims, they tore the Black Stone from its place in the wall and took it away with them. For twenty-two years the Stone remained at Hijr in El Hasâ in Eastern Arabia, where the chief of the Carmatites, Abu Tâhir, had made his headquarters, and to which place he desired to divert the Muhammadan

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pilgrimage. Ultimately the Stone was sent back to Mekka by a successor of Abu Tâhir in 339 A.H. In the course of this adventure it had been broken into pieces, but these having been re-assembled and mounted in a silver band, the Stone was again built into the wall of the Kaaba, where it has remained ever since.

Again in 413 A.H. the mad Sultân of Egypt, El Hâkim, sent an emissary to Mekka with instructions to destroy the Stone. His object is supposed to have been the diversion of the Pilgrimage to Cairo. The emissary, armed with a bar of iron, entered the Haram in the guise of a dervish. Striking the stone with his iron bar, he cried "How long will you worship this stone? Till when will you continue to worship this stone and Muhammad?" He managed to chip three small pieces from the Stone before he was seized by the outraged hâjjis, and torn to pieces.

Both Abu Tâhir the Carmatite and El Hâkim believed themselves to be divine.

Although the jagged edges and projections, which were doubtless once present on the surface of the Stone as the result of the rough handling which it received, have long since been worn smooth by the touch of millions of devotees, yet it is plainly apparent that cracks exist in it. The Stone exhibits a broken-up appearance. In several places the heads of silver nails are visible on its surface, and it is completely surrounded by a ring of brown cement which holds it rigidly in the silver mounting. The latter is extremely massive, and is oval in outline. Its vertical diameter is nearly two feet, and its horizontal diameter two and a half feet. The Stone is situated exactly at the corner of the Kaaba, and inclining towards neither wall, it faces nearly due east.

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At the southern angle of the Kaaba, called the Rukn el Yemâni, is situated another stone which is simply a piece of Mekkan granite. It is built into the angle of the wall at a height of five feet from the ground, and is some eighteen inches in length, but very narrow. It is placed in a vertical position. This corner of the House has been strengthened with large iron bolts and nails, driven into the cement between the stones. The heads of these bolts are quite free from rust, as they are kept burnished by the constant touch of hands.

There are two small openings, the edges of which are strongly bound with canvas, in the *kiswa* where it hangs before the two Stones.

When the Kaaba is in need of repair, the Shaybi selects a number of pious men who are skilled in the arts of building, choosing, as far as possible, men with large beards. Each one of those selected is presented with a complete set of new clothes—trousers, shirt, *thawb*, and turban—made of white calico. They are then commanded to bathe thoroughly and put on their new clothes. They next perform the lesser ablution (*el wudhû*), *towâf*, and pray two prostrations. They are then ready to work in the Kaaba. Each man, upon entering the House, performs a prayer, and then works for an hour. Having completed this, he is replaced by another. Rose-water is used for mixing the mortar, and the stones are squared before being taken into the Kaaba.

At the north-eastern side of the Kaaba, some two feet to the right-hand side of the door, there is an oblong trough sunk in the ground. It is close against the foundations, and is a foot deep, six feet long, and four feet wide. It is lined with white marble, and has three tombstone-shaped slabs of green or black stone

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let into its floor. This trough is known as El Maajan (i.e. the Kneading Trough), and is said to be the place in which Abraham and Ismayl mixed their mortar when building the Kaaba. It is a favourite place of prayer, for here the angel Gabriel prayed with Muhammad.

On the north-western side of the House there is an open space known as the El Hijr or Hijr Ismayl. This is enclosed within a semi-circular wall, some four and a half feet in height and nearly five feet thick, which bears the name El Hataym. The extremities of the Hataym curve round as though to meet the two corners of the Kaaba, but they stop short of them at a distance of some eight feet. The outer side of each extremity of the Hataym wall is not directly in line with the corner of the Kaaba on either side. The space thus enclosed is some thirty feet across, from the wall of the Kaaba beneath the water-spout to the centre of the arc of the Hataym. Its lateral measurement is twenty-seven feet between the inner sides of the Hataym's extremities.

The Hijr Ismayl is said to be part of the original site of the Kaaba, which latter was reduced in size when it was rebuilt by the Curaysh. It is paved with white marble, inlaid with several tombstone-shaped slabs of green and black stone. Two of the latter are reputed to cover the tombs of Ismayl and his mother Hagar. Thin lines of the same green and black stones, arranged in patterns, are let into this pavement also. Prayers said in this enclosure are considered as having been said in the Bayt Allah, as the latter formerly extended over this spot. The pilgrim performing towâf passes round the outside of the Hataym so as to include the Hijr Ismayl within his course. The Hataym wall is

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covered, both on its sides and its top, with slabs of white marble, which are copiously inscribed with Korânic and other texts.

Surrounding the Kaaba and the Hijr Ismayl there is a broad pavement of smooth marble, some forty-five feet wide, called El Matâf, the Place of Circumambulation. It describes an irregular oval, the dimensions of which are probably 150 feet by 125 feet. In the centre of this oval the Kaaba, and the Hijr with its Hataym, stand isolated. The marble pavement slopes gently downwards from the base of the Kaaba, until it meets another pavement, of granite, which is higher than itself by nine or ten inches. Just as the Matâf encircles the Kaaba so does the granite pavement encircle the Matâf. It is about thirty feet wide.

In addition to the interior of the Kaaba, there are four places on the outside of it at which it is particularly auspicious to make supplication to God. These are: the Multazam (that part of the Kaaba's wall which is between the door and the black Stone); the north-western wall, beneath the water-spout; the Maajan; and the place in the south-western wall where the second door of the Kaaba formerly existed.

The Muslims commonly suppose that great treasures are secreted in the Kaaba. Once Sabri, who besides being a Zemzemi was attached to the Mosque service in the capacity of "Igniter of the Incense," related to me the following anecdote:

He said that the Shaybi deputed him to clean the gold and silver lamps within the Kaaba. While he worked, the door was kept partly open so as to allow light to enter. Sabri sat behind the door. He was busy polishing a lamp, he said, when suddenly one of the marble slabs which line the walls fell outwards and

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rested against his knee. Looking up, startled, he was amazed to see that the collapse of the stone had disclosed a hollow place in the wall. In this niche, said Sabri, were piles and piles of large gold dînârs.

"Wallah, Hâjj Ahmad!" said he earnestly. "Each dînâr was like the Turkish five-guinea gold piece. And I looked at them and, Wallah! there were ten thousands of golden dînârs or more.

"How many?" I asked.

"Ten thousands, by the life of thine eye!" he cried, "and I examined one, and saw the words "Lâ ilâha ill Allah" on one face, and on the second face was the date and the Sultân's name. Only I could not read his name."

Sabri added that he hastily put the coin back in its place and replaced the marble slab, and said nothing about the matter.

At another time I questioned Amm Yûsef concerning this hidden hoard, and his reply was: "No one knows what is in the Kaaba. We speak not of it; and when we enter God's House we do not look about us in order to observe the decorations, but concentrate our thoughts upon the Lord, the Preserver—He who makes us rich without money. But truly it is said the Kaaba contains great stores of treasure—gold and silver and gems, and valuable books also. These are for the succour of the Muslimîn in an extremity. But we do not know what is in it. God is more knowing. He knows all things. Praise to Him."

In spite of this testimony, however, my personal opinion is that the only articles of value in the Kaaba are the lamps and incense-burners. At the same time I should certainly not be in the least astonished if the fact were proved to be otherwise. The tomb-chamber

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of the Prophet at El Medîna contained jewels and ornaments worth over two millions of pounds sterling a few years ago.

The frontispiece to this book is an enlargement of the only photograph which I took in Wahhâbite Arabia. It shows the Kaaba from the direction of Bâb es-Safâ, i.e. from the south-east.

XVI

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ONE day I went with Abd esh-Shukûr to the scene of a fire which had broken out in a little street between the Zugâg el Hajar and Sûk el-Layl.

We found the house, a four-storeyed one, still smouldering. Numbers of Mekkans, dwellers in neighbouring houses, were running between the bâzân in Sûk el-Layl and the burning house, carrying petrol tins and girbas filled with water. These were taken up to the roofs of the adjoining houses on either side, and the water poured into one end of wooden rain-water spouts, which had been detached from their places in the roofs for that purpose. The men who held the spouts directed them over the burning building so that the stream of water passing through them should pour down upon it. This is the Mekkans' method of putting out a fire. The neighbours regard it as a point of honour to render all the assistance in their power, and official notice of the occurrence is taken by the police, some of whom also turn out and help. At the time of which I write, however, there was no regular police force in Mekka, the Sharîf Ali having taken the Hâshimite police with him to Jidda, where they formed part of his army. Order was kept in Mekka by a squad of powerful black slaves belonging to Ibn Sa'ûd.

Having observed the scene for some minutes I left Abd esh-Shukûr, who wished to go to Sûk el-Layl,

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and crossing the Muddaâ I made my way homeward through the quarter of El Garâra.

As I walked up the dark straggling alley, I suddenly heard a familiar voice cry "Sallâh ed-Dîn!"

Now this word represented the other half of my name. It had been conferred upon me by a well-meaning old shaykh (of a corpulence most pronounced, and a piety) as a reward for my industry in mastering some of the mysteries of jurisprudence and Korânîc commentary.

The voice gave me a sudden shock, and almost simultaneously the sight of its owner's face confirmed my apprehension. The next moment I was shaking the hand of one named Husni, a native of Aleppo, who had known me as an Englishman in Egypt. I had not seen him for some weeks preceding my departure from the banks of the Nile, and had thought him to be in Damascus, whither it was then his purpose to proceed. He was now accompanied by a dark-skinned Arab wearing the Bedouin dress.

Husni was rather an interesting character. I had met him in the previous year at Cairo. I was one day sitting outside a coffee-house in the quarter called Bâb el Khalg. My companion was a certain Egyptian shaykh of a jovial turn, who had, in the course of our acquaintanceship, enlightened me upon many esoteric matters—some of an edifying nature; others quite the reverse.

As we sat beside the little marble-topped table, sipping coffee, I became aware of the silent approach of an outlandish figure, which slowly threaded its way among the coffee-drinkers on the pavement. He was a medium-sized yellow-skinned man, with small slanting eyes and a hairless face, dressed in loose trousers and jacket of unbleached calico. On his head was a large, battered, and weather-worn sun-helmet. He was a

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Chinaman; and so unchanged was his appearance from that of the lower-class men of the China ports, that he might have left Hongkong or Shanghai that very morning.

As the Chinaman approached, I beckoned to him. He glided up to our table and stood before me, and his expressionless detachment was such that it merely seemed as if a shadow had fallen there. A small cloud which passed across the sun just then was far more expressive than he. He carried a large basket, which contained collapsible rosettes and flowers made of coloured paper—hand-made things, such as the Chinese have excelled in fashioning for thousands of years. In their own country, for wedding processions and other displays, they make pagodas as large as omnibuses from nothing but paper on a cane framework—fashioned and painted in all kinds of fantastic designs—large-bellied mandarins and writhing dragons.

I enquired from what town he came, but he knew no Arabic. I then addressed him in the queer pidgin-English* of the China ports, and of this language I found that he possessed some knowledge.

In the midst of our conversation a young man rose from a neighbouring table, and approaching the Chinaman, began to address him in Chinese. This man, who was dressed in an European suit and a tarbûsh, was clean-shaven and rather thin. His complexion was pale and sallow. He was Husni. Having conversed for some moments, he turned to my companion and me, and told us that the Chinaman hailed from Shanghai, that he was travelling in order to see the world, and making his living by selling his paper flowers.

* "Pidgin" is a Chinese corruption of the word "business."

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I bought a rosette, and the Chinaman acknowledged my having paid several times its value by touching the coin to his forehead—his face, of old yellow ivory, never relaxing its carven lines. The shadow then glided away among the crowd of chattering Egyptians.

Husni, with the *bonhomie* of the Muhammadan East, sat down at our table. I soon learnt that his father had taken him from Aleppo to India when he himself was but a tiny child. From India they had travelled, by stages, to China; and at Hongkong Husni's father had become connected with the local agent of a line of steamers owned by an Indian Muhammadan. During the fifteen years of his residence in Hongkong, Husni had acquired a knowledge of both the Hokien and the Cantonese dialects. Finally he and his father had returned to their native Syria. Husni, however, was an inveterate wanderer. He had visited every town in Northern Africa and Asia Minor, and had also been to Mekka and El Medîna. He and I subsequently met frequently, and I found him an entertaining companion. He liked to hint that he was a potential king-maker, and he corresponded with several Islamic societies in India and elsewhere.

This was the man who now greeted me in Mekka.

I returned his salutation with guarded enthusiasm, endeavouring to cool his ardour with the intention of telling him privately that I had done him the honour of adopting his nationality for the time being. But in the next moment he had turned to his companion, the Bedouin.

"This one," said he, effusively, "is one of the greatest of the English, and a Muslim."

As he heard the word "Inkilîzi," Husni's companion looked serious and careful.

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"But are you of a truth an Inkilîzi?" he asked, regarding me earnestly.

"Inkilîzi!" said Husni in a tone of finality.

"Ay, yes!" I replied. "I am an Inkilîzi."

"But a Muslim—of course," he persisted.

Again Husni anticipated me with his effusive exaggeration.

"Muslim! This one is of the learned!" he cried with conviction.

"Naturally—a Muslim," I assured the Bedouin.

At that his gaze grew less intent. "El hamdu Lillah!" exclaimed he, as we turned to walk up the street.

"But say not thus to others than ourselves, O Sallâh ed-Dîn!" said Husni. "The ignorant ones do not understand. You have told them?"

"No," I replied. "They understand that I am of the people of Syria."

"Wallah, it is better so!" said he. "Neither will we tell it."

Nevertheless, the fact that there was an Englishman in Mekka was known, soon after that, to some of the minions of Ibn Sa'ûd. Going one day to the printing-press in order to purchase a copy of the Wahhâbî newspaper, "Umm el Qurâ," I found the editor, a Syrian, there. With exaggerated politeness he said that "one" had pointed me out to him and told him about me, and would I like to meet the Sultân? To this question I replied with a prompt affirmative. I thought it probable that they had decided to subject me to a verbal examination, as Muhammad Ali did in the case of Burckhardt. In such case my best plan was to meet them more than half way. In the result, however, I was never questioned at all, from which I conclude

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that my practice satisfied any observer who knew of my true identity.

Each, in his own heart, knows the significance of his intentions, whether good or bad. As for me, my sole object in assuming disguise was that I might be inconspicuous. This matter of inconspicuousness is very important in a country largely inhabited by religious fanatics and robbers. Many Persians and other followers of the Shîa or Schism call themselves Kurds, Bokhârans, or Circassians when making the Pilgrimage, for there is more ill-feeling between these schismatics and the Sunnis (orthodox Muslims) than there ever is between Roman Catholics and Protestants. In the Hijâz, the Shîa fraternity is held in great contempt. Occasionally, too, Sunnis, whose avarice is stronger than their vanity, assume the character of persons in a much lower order of society. This enables them to escape with a lesser degree of imposition at the hands of mutawwifs and others, who adjust their charges to the station of the hâjjis.

The Syrian told me that Ibn Sa'ûd would be "sitting" in the Hamîdiya on the following afternoon, and invited me to meet him there. Accordingly I went with him, an hour before sunset, to the office of the government. The reception-room is on the first floor, and its windows overlook the Haram gate called Bâb Umm Hâni. Upon mounting the stairs to the upper landing, I found half a dozen of Ibn Sa'ûd's Bedouin escort sitting there on benches. As we entered the room, the Sultân, who was sitting on a large divan with his back to the window, rose and extended his hand. At the same moment the Syrian told him who I was—"Sallâh ed-Dîn El Inkilîzi."

Abdul Azîz motioned me to a seat beside him on

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the divan, and all resumed their seats. There were merely some four or five of his employees in the room. This was in the days before the fall of Jidda. After that event, the word had only to go round that the Sultân was "sitting" in the Hamîdiya, for half the leaders and place-hunters of Mekkan society to crowd into the government building in order to make their flattering speeches and recite their poems of praise.

Ibn Sa'ûd, having politely enquired as to my "state," now launched forth into a long harangue about 'Isa, Muhammad, and religion generally. After a couple of minutes I felt I had had more than enough of that, so in order to change the subject I told him that I thought of writing an account of his career. This appeared to please him exceedingly, and he smilingly expressed his appreciation of my suggestion, saying that he was greatly obliged to me.

Soon afterwards, having read through and approved the manuscript of the editor's leading article for the forthcoming number of his paper, Ibn Sa'ûd rose, and with a word of farewell resumed his sandals and went out. At this time he was using a light motor-car which had recently been brought by sea to El Gunfuda. He now took up his position in the back seat of his car, the chief of the escort sat in front with the driver, the rank and file of the escort ranged themselves along the foot-boards, and away they all went to the house of As-Sagâf in El Abtah.

I subsequently visited Ibn Sa'ûd several times at his palace in the Abtah. On one of these occasions he told me that his concerns were three—"Firstly, Allah; secondly, my beloved . . . Muhammad; thirdly, the Arab nation." On his return from Bahra on the Jidda road, where he had been in conference with a British

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mission concerning the boundaries between his territories and those of Transjordan and El Irâk, he told me that an excellent understanding had been arrived at, and that he was exceedingly pleased with the result of the conference; particularly with the fact that certain disputed territories in the Wâdi Sirhân, north of El Jauf, had been ceded to him.

On one occasion I told him the Mekkan tale that the white turban-cloth worn by the Ikhwân in place of the agâl was in reality carried so that it might serve as their burial shroud in case of sudden death on the field of battle.* This made Ibn Sa'ûd laugh, and he told me that they wear it because they think it is the correct head-dress for one given up to religion. Pointing round the circle of grim-faced rascals who had that morning ridden in from the East, and who now sat before him, he said "These have all killed men, and lived by the raid. But now they are mudayyina, and they wear the turban-cloth in order to distinguish themselves from the others." His air of kind approval and of pleasure in the contemplation of them as he made these remarks was very charming. One felt that he understood his rabble infinitely better than anybody else could possibly understand them. They, on their part, looked fixedly at their captain, watching his every expression, with a sort of hard yet half-bashful admiration struggling to sweeten the habitual sourness of their stern visages. They were of the tribe or community of Ghatghat,† the most fanatical and

* This tale was current among the lower classes, but not among the learned. The latter would know that a Muslim killed in the course of a jihâd or holy war (and all Muhammadan wars are jihâds in the Muslim view) requires no shroud. He is a martyr, and is buried in the clothes in which he fell.

† I designate the Ghatghats a "tribe or community", because

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violent of all the Nejd Ikhwân. Whenever, as frequently happened, a party of the Ikhwân came to blows with the Mekkan crowd, the Ghatghats were invariably in the thick of the fray. In its grammatical origin the word *ghatghat* means "to boil audibly" (of a cooking-pot) or "to rage and roar" (of the sea). The Nejd Ghatghats live up to their name.

When the news arrived that the British Government, or the government of Transjordan, had occupied Maân and El Akaba, Ibn Sa'ûd took the occasion of my visiting him to indulge in a defiant speech. "Let the Europeans come with their guns, and their armoured cars, and their aeroplanes," said he, "we will retire into our deserts, and then if they try to follow us we will turn upon them." I told him I did not imagine that the European governments wanted anything from his deserts, and that they respected him for upholding his own rights and those of the Arabs.

"El hamdu Lillah!" exclaimed he, looking round the circle of faces with a beaming countenance.

A number of mysterious Syrians arrived in Mekka at various times, by devious routes. At this time Syria was in revolt, and the French were smashing up Damascus with artillery. One of Ibn Sa'ûd's Syrian employees told me that his master had been repeatedly begged to go to the assistance of the Druzes and Syrians, and help them to drive the French out of Syria. His opinion was that the Sultân would have had no hesitation in attacking the French, provided that he could have relied upon Great Britain's neutrality. At this time, however, Jidda and El Medîna were fully occupying his attention.

the communities of the Ikhwân are in most cases composed of elements from a number of tribes. The Ghatghats are drawn chiefly from the tribes of Cahtân and 'Atayba.

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As an example of Ibn Sa'ûd's way of exacting obedience from his Bedouins, this incident was recounted to me by Abdulla Damlûji. A number of the Ikhwân had been detailed to join the Wahhâbî forces besieging Yanbua. They, however, requested Ibn Sa'ûd to agree to their remaining in Mekka until after the Hajj. This he refused to allow, but they still argued and murmured, saying that they might not again have so good an opportunity of performing the Pilgrimage. Having chopped logic with them for some minutes, Ibn Sa'ûd suddenly took a sword from one of his attendants, and drawing the blade, he swung it aloft.

"Wallah! You shall go to Yanbua," said he, "and if I see one of you at 'Arafa on the Day of Pilgrimage, wallah, I will slay him on the slope of Jebel Rahma, even as I slew your fathers."

The Bedouins went to Yanbua. No doubt Ibn Sa'ûd would have kept his word had they appeared at 'Arafa.

On the other hand, instead of putting the young princes of the vanquished house of Ibn Rashîd to death, as many Arabs would have done, he is bringing them up with his own sons.

Abdulla Damlûji, whom I have just mentioned, was formerly a doctor in the Turkish service, and is now Ibn Sa'ûd's adviser for foreign affairs. He is a native of Mosul, and is the most accomplished and able of the Sultân's advisers. He has an excellent knowledge of French, and knows something of English. He accompanied Ibn Sa'ûd's second son, Faysal, to England and France in 1926.

During one of my visits to Ibn Sa'ûd, the Shaybi came in to discuss the arrangements for some repairs which were necessary to the roof of the Kaaba. He

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kissed the Imâm's shoulder, and seated himself. In the course of the session of the mejlis, he learnt of my nationality, and upon the break-up of the meeting he took me by the arm and invited me to visit him at his house. This I did on a subsequent day. The Shaybi possesses a house at every point in or near Mekka at which he is likely to spend a night or two annually. In Mekka itself he has several houses, some of which are occupied by his kinsmen. He himself usually lives in a house near Es-Safâ, or in a villa of one storey situated on the summit of Abi Cubays.

The path which leads to the top of the hill starts behind Es-Safâ. It ascends in the form of short flights of roughly constructed steps. These flights of steps describe a zig-zag course between the houses which cover the slope of the hill, until, finally, the climber emerges into the open near the summit. At the highest point stands the small mosque which is named after Bilâl, the Prophet's Abyssinian slave, whom he manumitted. This person, who possessed a powerful and musical voice, was appointed by his master to the office of muaddin. He is known among the Muhammadans as "Sayyidna Bilâl"—"Our Lord Bilâl." Bilâl's mosque had been partly demolished by the Wahhâbîs, who thought that the Muslims visited the place in order to worship the departed spirit of black Bilâl, or to beg his intercession with God in their behalf. A magnificent view of the house-crowded Mekkan valley, with the Haram in its centre, is obtained from the summit of Abi Cubays. Behind the mosque of Bilâl, on the further extremity of the hill, there is a small walled enclosure known as the Mosque of the Moon's Splitting-asunder. This is the site upon which Muhammad stood when, in response to the

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demands of the Curaysh, he asked God to divide the moon into two pieces. His prayer was answered—one half of the moon appearing on each side of the hill. This and other similar fables were invented, long after Muhammad's death, by some of the more enthusiastic and less balanced of his followers. He himself was endowed with a keen sense of humour and strong critical power. Although he claimed to have had miraculous experiences, he does not appear to have ever arrogated the power to perform miracles.

In front of the mosque of Bilâl, and a little distance down the slope, stands the house of the Shaybi. When I arrived a sweet-mannered Abyssinian slave, dressed in clean white Bedouin clothes, took my name in to his master. In a moment he returned, and leading me through a small ante-chamber in which a number of servants were sitting on the floor, he stood aside for me to pass through a door at the further end. Entering, I found the old gentleman lying down on a thick and magnificent carpet which was spread upon the floor. He was reading an Arabic newspaper published in Java; and his face, which is nearly as black as that of an African, looked grave as he learnt of the state of Islâm in that country. The room, which measured some twenty feet by fifteen, was furnished with carpets, and at either side of it there stood a thickly cushioned divan. Two large and low armchairs stood near an open window, through which the Haram could be seen in the valley below.

The Opener of God's House rose with heavy grunts to greet me, and invited me to take one of the armchairs, he himself taking the other. His first concern, after enquiring as to my "state," was to question me earnestly as to whether I could really read and write

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English. I told him that I was better at English than at Arabic, and that amazed him grotesquely, though he knew little of the extent of my knowledge of Arabic. It seemed to him a wonderful thing that anybody should be able to read and write English, and I feel certain that my replies did not convince him of the truth of what I said.

He next told me that his office of Opener of God's House was "the one only office to which a man had been appointed directly by God." In support of this contention he quoted a verse from the chapter entitled *Women*:—"Verily God commandeth you that ye restore unto whom they belong those things entrusted to you." This passage was revealed on the day of Muhammad's triumphant re-entry into Mekka in the year 8 A.H. (see Chapter X). At that time the keys of the Kaaba were held by a great-grandson of Kusay ibn Kilâb—one Othmân ibn Talha, and upon Ali's taking them from him, the Prophet rebuked his companion and commanded him to return the keys to Ibn Talha, saying to the latter. "Here! Take them hereditarily for ever."

"Therefore," said the old man to me, "this office will be filled by my descendants until the Last Day, by God's Command."

Coffee was brought in by the charming Abyssinian slave, whose eyes shone with all the artless kindness, but without the bashfulness, of an unsophisticated girl.

"Where is the boy? Tâhir—where is he?" asked the Shaybi.

"We will bring him immediately, O my sir!" said the slave.

A few moments later there entered the room a little thin Bedouin boy, wild-eyed and portentous of mien.

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He was clothed in nothing but a little thawb, dyed brown.

"This one," said the Shaybi to me, "is a boy of the Bedouins, whom I am bringing up at my own cost. His parents are dead."

The boy, who may have been eight or nine years old, came across the carpet with an unnatural secret expression on his little thin face.

"Come, O Tâhir!" said the Shaybi, with an encouraging smile. "Show us your games!"

At once the poor little wretch began to perform all sorts of ludicrous, or rather pitiful, antics for the Shaybi's amusement. He danced and tumbled; he imitated the repulsive actions of a monkey; he barked like a dog and ran across the room on all fours; he caught up a stick and with it performed an imitation of military rifle exercises. The old man laughed heartily at the poor little urchin's foolery, thus encouraging him to further imbecilities. He worked his face and his eyes into idiotic contortions, and all the while the Opener of God's House shook and spluttered with delight. Finally the poor child perched on the Shaybi's knee, and scratched his sides with ape-like realism, while the old ogre stroked his back as though he were indeed a monkey. Several other visitors arriving, I took my departure.

One day I was accosted near the Hamîdiya by a tall pale-faced man, clad in a grey Egyptian caftân and a large white turban. His features were handsome; his beard long and black; his expression thoughtful and ascetic. He was a Dâghestâni—a native of the Caucasus. Having friends among the government officials, he had heard of me, and he now begged of me to teach him English. This person was apparently devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. At the age of twenty he

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had left home and kindred, and travelling by the railway from Derbend to Batûm, he had taken ship for Egypt. Arrived in Cairo, he had entered the Muhammadan university of El Azhar. After spending some twelve years in El Azhar he had entered another school, known as Dâr ed-Daawa, in which he had begun the study of English. Recently he had travelled through Palestine and Syria, with the object of returning to his native country by the land route through Asia Minor. In Turkey he had been suspected of espionage, and imprisoned. After months of captivity he had been released and driven over the border into Syria. He then determined to set out for Mekka, and, supporting himself by the sale of finjâns of coffee, and sometimes by teaching, he managed to reach Maân. There he took the train to El Medîna. The Wahhâbîs, however, had damaged the railway line in many places, and consequently the journey occupied thirty days. He might have accomplished it in twenty days on his feet. After visiting the Prophet's tomb, he left El Medîna alone, intending to walk to Mekka. Outside the Prophet's city he was waylaid by Bedouin thieves, and robbed of all he possessed save a few rags; and on arriving at Mekka he felt "nearer to death than to life." In spite of his sufferings he spoke enthusiastically of Arabia as the land of the free, and said that Mekka was the earthly paradise. "For in Mekka," said he, "a man has only to conduct himself according to the teaching of Islâm, in order to be left entirely to himself. Taxation, registration of aliens, passports, sanitary by-laws, and many other inconvenient matters are practically unknown."

Mekka and El Medîna are the Muhammadan sanctuaries, and since the penetration of the Muhammadan

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countries of Asia and Africa by European powers, the permanent foreign population of these two cities has enormously increased. In them the Asiatic or the African patriot, who loves his own country but who is known not to love the foreign country which rules his own, may find an inviolable refuge. For on the yellow plain to westward of these two cities the might of Europe is stayed. It is not stayed by physical obstacles, though there are physical obstacles. It is stayed by an idea—by the idea of a force whose power is unknown. Muhammadans call it the Will of God.

The Dâghestâni's name was Ibn es-Sayyâd, and he admired the Wahnâbîs. He determined to become one of them, and as a preliminary step he changed his "mazhab" or system of jurisprudence from the Shâfi'i to the Hanbali. Then he began to pray among the Wahnâbîs, behind the Makâm el Hanbali. But so soon as poor Ibn es-Sayyâd took his place in the row of worshippers, with his shoulder next to that of a Nejder, the latter would at once leave his place and join himself to the end of another row in front or behind. For nearly six months the patient Caucasian prayed among the wild men, but always a space was left between him and the nearest of them. He was with them, but not of them. At the end of six months he had an idea. He would dress in Bedouin clothes, and make his appearance correspond to that of his heroes. This he did, and it is pleasant to record that on the very first occasion of his transformation, he had the satisfaction of praying with his elbows pressed closely against the unclean abaya of a "brother" on either side of him.

Another person with whom I became acquainted

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in Mekka was an educated man of considerable charm—Sharaf Pasha 'Adnân, the chief of the Ashrâf, and one of the candidates for the Amîrate of Mekka before Ibn Sa'ûd made plain his intention not to give any important position to any member of the Ashrâf. Sharaf Pasha's favourite theme concerned the material development of the Hijâz. He saw no reason why there should not be railways and motor-car roads all over the country. "Were we to practise irrigation," said he, "the country of the Arabs, mâ shâ Allah, would become like Egypt and Syria, and one might travel from Mekka to Jidda without seeing the sun—by reason of the shadowing trees which would grow by the way." He would extract petrol from the earth—had it not been found at El Wejh?—copper, quick-silver, iron, and many other minerals also. The Bedouins would abandon their roving life, and till the ground, and . . . and so on.

Just before my arrival in Mekka, there had reached that city a man whose word is law to many thousands of wild desert men in Northern Africa—Es-Sayyid Ahmad Es-Sanûsi. During the Great War, he and his followers had given much trouble on the Western frontier of Egypt, where an expensive campaign was launched against them. For some months before his arrival in Mekka he had been living in exile in Turkey, and having been refused permission by the British authorities to travel to Jidda by the route of the Suez Canal, he had come across the desert from Damascus to El Jauf and Hâil, and from there to Mekka. Visiting him one day at his house on Jebel Abi Cubays, I found him instructing a company of his followers in the traditions of the Prophet.

Ahmad Es-Sanûsi is a man of medium height and

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build. His face is long and heavy, and were it not for the fact that his eyes slope downwards towards their outer corners, he would present a perfectly Chinese appearance. His eyes are dull and almost expressionless, and he rarely smiles. He dresses entirely in white garments, and wears a large white turban. He is renowned, at any rate among those who know him but slightly, for the non-committal nature of his conversation. I asked him, among other matters, what was the latest news concerning a part of the territory occupied by his followers in Libya, over the possession of which Egypt and Italy were then disputing. This district included his own former headquarters of Jaghbûb Sîwas. He replied that he had no information as to what was happening, but that all things belong to God.

Ahmad Es-Sanûsi is the head of the Sanûsi Ikhwân, or brotherhood, which is a dervish order. Its members are found chiefly in Northern Africa, Egypt, and Western Arabia. The order possesses zâwiyas or meeting-houses in Mekka, El Medîna, Et-Tâif, Mina, and many other towns in Arabia, in addition to those in Egypt, Syria, and Northern Africa. Large numbers of the people of Mekka and El Medîna belong to the order, and so also do more than half of the Bedouins of the Hijâz—at any rate, nominally.

The dervish orders do not constitute sects. They each have a distinct system of supererogatory religious exercises, including the Zikr or invocation of God's Name. Needless to say, the Shaykh of a large dervish order possesses considerable power, which he may wield according to the dictates of his character.

Many of the religious shaykhs of Mekka are gentle old men, possessing a religious faith almost epic, such

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as is rarely seen outside the Haramayn,* save perhaps in Christian monasteries. One of these gave me an amulet to preserve me from the plague.

Not all of these shaykhs are simple and genuine. Many of them indulge in practices which are opposed to their religion. Some of them, in addition to receiving remittances from Muhammadans in far countries for the purpose of performing the Hajj on behalf of a deceased person who was unable to perform it himself in his life-time, accept money to perform that rite for living persons. The former of these arrangements is allowed in Islâm, but the latter is opposed to the Korânic law. A shaykh may receive scores of fees each year for such pilgrimages by proxy. In that case he will pay a fraction of each fee sent him to separate substitutes, who each perform the Hajj in the name of a deceased person, whose friends have sent the fee.

Many impious practices are current in the matter of amulets and charms. For instance, there was a barren woman who desired to have issue, and her husband confided this matter to a shaykh who directed that the woman should be brought to him. This having been done, he requested her to disrobe, when he wrote a charm upon her abdomen. My informant assured me that this proceeding produced the desired result with gratifying promptitude. Such practices as this, however, are performed only by hypocritical and mercenary men, and are done in secret.

In cases of sickness it is generally believed that the most efficacious treatment is to write a Korânic verse on a piece of paper, then to soak the paper in a finjân of water until the ink is washed off, and finally for the sufferer to drink the inky water.

* The two Sanctuaries, i.e. Mekka and El Medîna.

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The Korân yields the solution to every difficulty.

One of my acquaintances, by name Nâsir ibn 'Abdu, had painted on the door of his house the words "God is with the patient ones" (Allah ma 'es-sâbirîn). Visiting him on one occasion, and having knocked at the door half a dozen times, I began to think this writing extremely applicable to myself. As a matter of fact, however, Nâsir was the unfortunate possessor of a quarrelsome wife, and he had written this Korânic excerpt on his door in order that, reading it whenever he entered his house, he might summon his powers of patience for the ensuing encounter.

XVII

DESCRIPTION OF THE HARAM OF MEKKA

"UNBELIEVERS," said Abdurrahmân, "cannot exist in Mekka. The dogs would tear them to pieces in the streets, or God would strike them with thunderbolts from the skies."

"Why do unbelievers come to Mekka?" I asked.

"They come," said Abdul Fattâh, "in order to throw poison into the well Zemzem, and thus kill all the Muslimîn in Mekka."

We were sitting in the mag'od one morning—Abdurrahmân, Abdul Fattâh, and I. The cronies had not yet made their appearance.

"There came an unbeliever in one of the past years . . . you remember, Amm Abdurrahmân?" said Abdul Fattâh, "but we knew it not. One day Allah sent a thunderbolt from the skies, and struck him dead. Then it was known that he was an unbeliever. For when his comrades came to wash him for burial, they found that he was not circumcised. He came with the Turkish troops, as a soldier; and he was that day on guard in Fort Filfil. There were others in the tower with him when the bolt fell, but he alone was slain, and the crack in the masonry of the tower is there till now."

"There is no power and no strength but in God . . . The High . . . The Tremendous!" said Abdurrahmân.

"There is no mention in the Korân of circumcision," I said.

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"But it is wājib" (obligatory), said Abdul Fattâh.

"No!" said Abdurrahmân. "Sunna muakkada [unequivocally the Prophet's example], and very desirable."

They believe that Muhammad was born without that which is removed in the operation of circumcision. The modern Muslims regard this matter as being of such importance that the majority of them think that a man cannot be a Muslim unless he is circumcised. This tradition of the excommunicating or outcasting of the uncircumcised has been handed down among the Semites from generation to generation since the days of Abraham. In Genesis, chapter xvii, God is reported to have addressed Abraham in the following words:—

"He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child . . . that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

The observance of this rite thus became of paramount importance, being a direct command from God; and Jesus Christ himself conformed to it (Luke ii. 21).

Although the Muhammadans, in seeking the ordinances for their religious rites, go back no further than the time of Muhammad, yet they believe that Muhammad's mission was to perfect the true religion revealed to Adam, and subsequently brought ever nearer perfection by the successive progressions of Abraham, of Moses, of David, and of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, then, the Muhammadan rite of circumcision takes its sanction, and its obligatory nature, from this passage in Genesis.

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"Another time," said Abdul Fattâh, "some of the people found one with a book in his baggage, and on the binding was a picture of the cross. They called upon him to testify [that God is One, and Muhammad His Prophet], but he ran from the house and left them, and took refuge in the Hamîdiya."

"When was this?" I asked.

"It was in the days of the Turks," replied Abdul Fattâh, "and Sayyidna (the Sharîf of Mekka) commanded that he should be taken to Jidda, and there let go free. And the soldiers took him and buffeted him with their guns, and made him mount upon a camel. Wallah, I saw it with my eye! And when they came without the city, on the Jidda road, they made him dismount. Then they tied a rope to his neck, and dragged him along on his feet in this wise. And when they came in the midst of the wilderness they hit him with lead" (i.e. shot him).

Abd esh-Shukûr now entered the mag'od, and saluting us with peace, sat down. He had promised to accompany me to the Haram that morning in order to point out to me the various features of interest within the sacred walls.

"It may be that Allah extended the kâfir's life that he might become a Muslim," said he, as Abdul Fattâh kissed his hand. "Were it not for that, the dogs would have killed him before."

These dogs of Mekka are strange curs. They are of the usual type of pariah—half wolf, half lurcher. The predominating colour among them is a light brown; but white, dun, chocolate-brown, and black are also seen. They act as scavengers in the city, and each hâra has its proper pack. Dogs entering a strange quarter are promptly chased out again by the rightful

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canine custodians of its rubbish-heaps. The main road, however, from Jarwal to El Maala, appears to be common ground, as I once observed a couple of dogs travel nearly the whole length of it without being molested by other dogs on the way. The adult Mekkans avoid touching these animals, as the dog is unclean; but some of the little boys discover a great joy in thwacking them with sticks or pelting them with stones. When hit, the dog does not usually run away. He simply curls himself up, tucks his tail in, and stands still, with his eye on his aggressor. Perhaps he will emit an occasional yelp. I have frequently seen a dog, lying asleep in the dust of the street, rudely awakened by blows from a heavy stick. The only response made by the philosophical mongrel was that he slowly raised his head and looked round enquiringly, as though "to be resolved" who it was that "so unkindly knocked." When the little boy had sated his lust, the dog lowered his head in a bored manner, and resumed his interrupted repose. If a walker stumbles against a sleeping dog, the latter makes no effort to get out of the way. It calmly lies its ground, and leaves the walker to make his own arrangements about further progress. Some of the Mekkans make a regular practice of throwing out food to the dogs. I never saw one of these animals near any gate of the Haram, though I have frequently seen cats within the sacred Mosque. Dogs may not be killed in Mekka, as they are protected by the law of sanctuary.

As the cronies began to arrive, Abd esh-Shukûr and I rose to go to the Mosque.

The inner sanctuary, or Haram, of Mekka was originally a small open space about the Kaaba, surrounded by the houses of the Curaysh. It comprised no greater area than the space which is now known as

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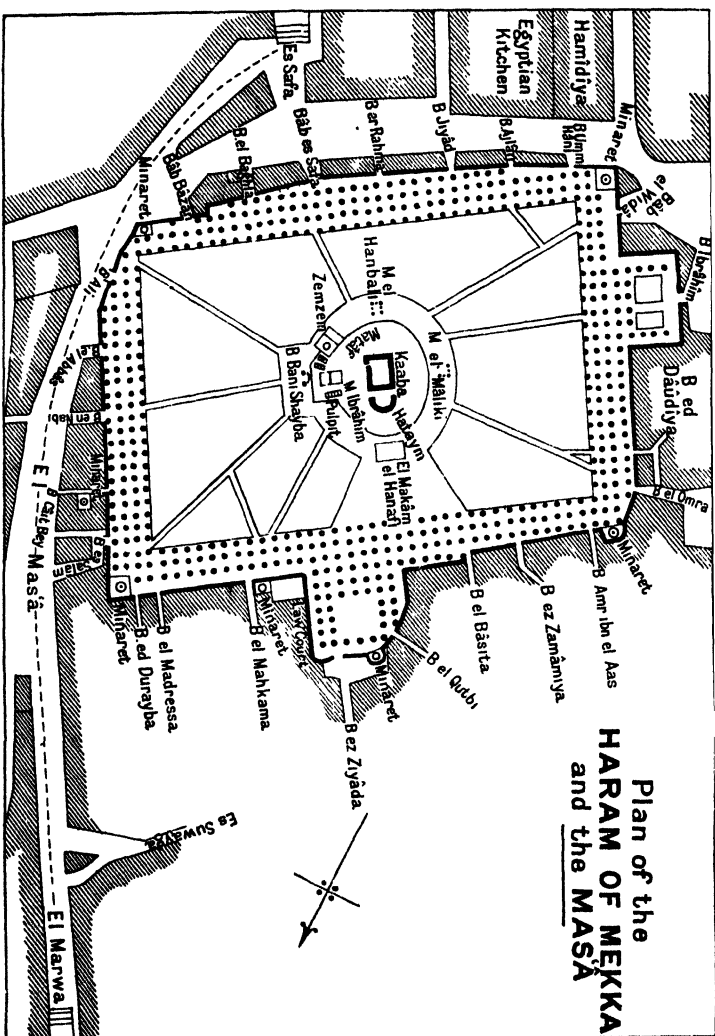
El Matâf. In course of time the Mosque was enlarged by successive Khalîfas, and about it a wall was built. The Haram was built as it now stands by order of the Turkish Sultân Sulaymân in 979 A.H. (1570 A.D.).

Its boundaries form an irregular parallelogram, the average interior length of which is 540 feet, and the average breadth 365 feet. At the middle of the north-western side of the quadrangle, an additional space projects beyond the parallelogram. This space is in the form of a rough square, and measures some 95 feet from its south-western to its north-eastern side, and 85 feet from north-west to south-east. It is called Ziyâdat Dâr en-Nadwa, and was added to the Mosque in 281 A.H. by the Abbasside Khalîfa El Muatadhad.

At the south-western side of the Mosque there is a second projection, which is known as Ziyâdat Bâb Ibrâhîm. This forms a parallelogram, 85 feet long from south-east to north-west by 55 feet in the opposite dimension. It was added to the Mosque in 376 A.H. by order of the Abbasside Jaafar El Mugtadar.

The great stone walls which enclose the Haram are 25 feet in height, and are very thick. Within them, on every side of the quadrangle, extend cloisters, which vary in width between 35 and 40 feet. The columns which support the roof of these cloisters are said to be some 550 in number. More than half of them are of white or veined marble; mostly plain cylindrical shafts, tapering slightly; and one or two of them are spirally or vertically fluted. One of the columns opposite the Hataym is of a reddish porphyry, and there are two of red granite. The remainder of the cylindrical columns are of grey granite. The diameter of these pillars varies between eighteen and twenty inches at the base, and many of them are

Plan of the HARAM OF MEKKA and the MASĀ



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strengthened with iron bands. They are mounted on circular bases, and the capitals are mostly of Saracenic stalactite design.

These columns extend round the quadrangle in a triple row, though in some parts, where the wall of the Mosque bulges out of a straight line, they are four deep. Every fourth column is octagonal, and is built of blocks of the fine grey stone of Jebel el Kaaba. These octagonal pillars are coloured with alternate bands of red, yellow, and blue paint, but they are whitened to a height of eight feet from the ground. The arches which the columns support are also painted in this manner, and the inner sides of the domes which they carry are whitened. The ground beneath the cloisters is paved with roughly hewn blocks of Mekkan granite cemented together. This pavement presents an uneven cobbled surface which is very tiring to the bare feet.

In the Haram wall there are 24 public gates. Some of these possess only one opening, or doorway, while others possess more than one. The following list will explain the position and form of each gate. In it the principal gates are marked with an asterisk.

Gates in the north-eastern wall:—	No. of Openings
1. Bâb es-Salâm*	3
2. Bâb Câit Bey	1
3. Bâb en-Nabi or el Janâiz*	2
4. Bâb el 'Abbâs*	3
5. Bâb Ali*	3
Gates in the south-eastern wall:—	
6. Bâb Bâzân*	2
7. Bâb el Baghla*	2
8. Bâb es-Safâ*	5

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	No. of Openings
9. Bâb er-Rahma*	2
10. Bâb Jiyâd*	2
11. Bâb 'Ajlân*	2
12. Bâb Umm Hâni*	2

Gates in the south-western wall:—

13. Bâb el Widâ*	2
14. Bâb Ibrâhîm*	1
15. Bâb ed-Dâûdiyya	1
16. Bâb el 'Omra*	1

Gates in the north-western wall:—

17. Bâb 'Amr ibn el 'Aas*	1
18. Bâb ez-Zamâmiya	1
19. Bâb el Bâsita	1
20. Bâb el Qutbi	1
21. Bâb ez-Ziyâda*	3
22. Bâb el Mahkama	1
23. Bâb el Madressa	1
24. Bâb ed-Durayba	1

Total number of doorways	44
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Bâb es-Salâm is the gate through which pilgrims usually enter the Mosque for the first time. Bâb Câit Bey is named after a Sultân of Egypt who built the minaret above it. Bâb en-Nabi is the gate through which, or from the direction of which, the Prophet used to enter the Mosque, when coming from Khadîja's house. It also bears the name Bâb el Janâiz, because the dead are carried out of it on their way to be buried in the Maala. Bâb el 'Abbâs is named after the prophet's uncle, whose house still stands opposite to it in the Masâ. On the inside surface of the Haram



THE GATE CALLED BAB 'ALI

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wall, between Bâb el ‘Abbâs and Bâb Ali, the Name of God, and the names of Muhammad and the first four khalifas, Abu Bakr, Umar, Othmân, and Ali, are painted in the thuluthi script with the alifs* nearly four feet long. Bâb Bâzân is so named because it faces towards the bâzân in Jiyâd. Bâzân is the name given to the small reservoirs or tanks which are connected with the aqueduct of ‘Ayn Zubayda. There are seven of these in different parts of Mekka, and also one at each of ‘Arafa, Muzdalfa, and Mina. From Bâb es-Safâ the pilgrim leaves the Haram in order to perform the saaya or running, which is started from the hill of Safâ opposite. Bâb ‘Ajlân is named after a sharîf of that name, who built a school adjacent to it. Bâb Umm Hâni is named after a daughter of Abu Tâlib and sister of the fourth Khalîfa, Ali, who possessed a house at this point. The ground on which this house once stood is now part of the Haram. Bâb el Widâ, or the Gate of Leave-taking, is so named because the pilgrims leave the Mosque for the last time by this way when departing for Jidda. Bâb Ibrâhîm takes its name from a tailor who once plied his trade near it. Through Bâb el ‘Omra the pilgrim, who has journeyed out to the Haram limits in order to assume the ihrâm, enters the Mosque to perform the rites of the ‘Omra or Lesser Pilgrimage. Bâb ‘Amr ibn el ‘Aas bears the name of the Muhammadan conqueror of Egypt. Bâb el Qutbi is named after the Mekkan historian, Qutb ed-Dîn, who lived in a house in the lane without. Bâb ez-Ziyâda, or the Gate of the Increase, takes its name from the fact that it leads to that part of the Mosque which was added to the main quadrangle. This gate is sometimes called Bâb es-

* Alif is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet.

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Suwayga, after the market-place of that name to which it gives access. Bâb el Mahkama is adjacent to the Law Court, as its name implies.

In addition to the 24 gates enumerated, there is a doorway in the wall between Bâb Ibrâhîm and Bâb ed-Dâûdiya. This gives access to a school, called Madressat As-Sagâf, and during school hours it remains open, forming an additional means of egress into the street beyond. There is also a small door close to the right-hand side of Bâb Ibrâhîm. This admits to a disused hospice (rubât). It is known as Bâb Ibn 'Agîl, and I never saw it open. A number of other little doors lead to the minarets, the caves of the Zemzemis, or into private chambers which have windows looking into the Mosque from beneath the roof of the cloisters. These chambers belong to Mekkan families, or are held in mortmain for the benefit of the Mosque, and they are often rented to wealthy hâjjis for the pilgrimage season. All of the principal gates have Korânic or other inscriptions, some in the Kufic character, painted or chiselled upon the outer aspects of the lintels or in the spandrels. The arches of some of the gates describe a plain curve, while others are obtusely pointed. Every entrance is fitted with wooden doors, but the principal gates remain open all night—only one leaf of their double doors being closed.

The ground-level outside the Mosque walls has risen, in the course of the centuries, far above the original level of the valley's bottom. The true surface of the latter is now visible only within the Mosque walls. Without the walls, the ground-level is now, in some places, as much as ten feet above that within. At other points it is no more than seven feet higher. In consequence of this variation in ground-levels the gates of

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the Haram are approached from within by means of flights of deep stone steps. These flights of steps are longer than is necessary to reach the higher level, because the thresholds of the gates are raised, in most cases some three feet above the upper ground-level. Three or four steps on the outside of the threshold lead down to the ground. These raised thresholds act as dams to prevent the sudden floods, which sweep down the valley, from pouring into the Mosque.

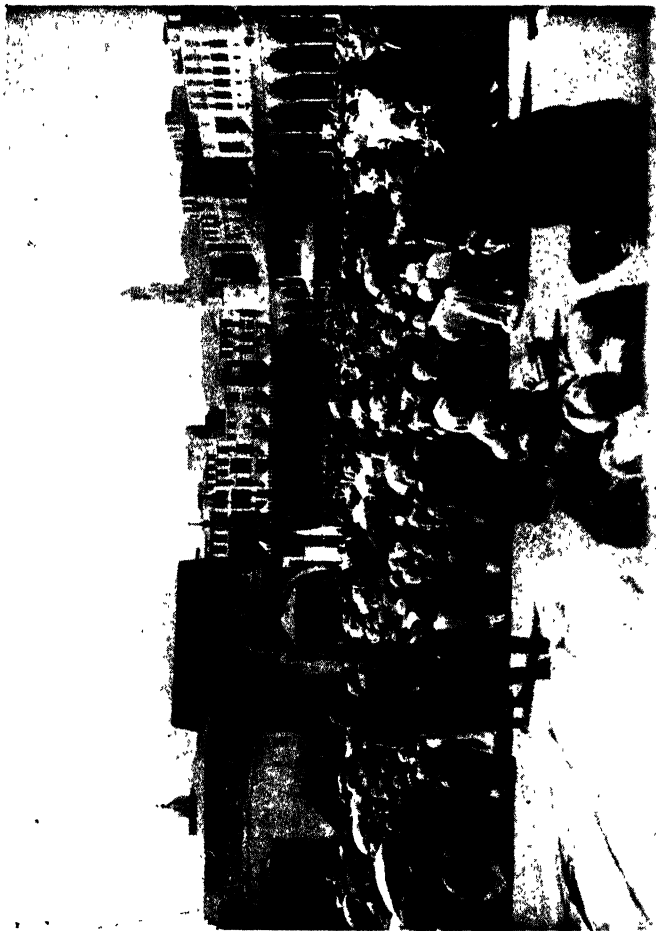
One or two of the gates are on a level with the Mosque floor, and in such cases the necessary flight of steps connecting the two ground-levels is situated outside the gate. In all such cases the gate leads into a narrow lane—a mere passage-way between the houses—in which it is as easy to construct a dam as it is to construct one in a doorway. The low-level gates of the Haram are Bâb es-Salâm, Bâb Câit Bey, Bâb ed-Dâûdiya, Bâb el Mahkama, Bâb el Madressa, and Bâb ed-Durayba. Bâb es-Salâm requires special attention. This gate gives access to the sûk of the booksellers and stationers, which is a narrow street, some eighty yards long, with little shop-recesses on either side. The street remains on the same level as the Mosque, but at its further end, where it joins the Masâ, a flight of stone steps takes one to the higher level. A further point of interest connected with Bâb es-Salâm is that outside it, at a distance of five or six paces, the street is completely blocked from side to side by a long narrow slab of granite, set edgewise in the ground. This forms an obstacle some two feet high. The Mekkans say this is the idol El-Lât (mentioned in the Korân, chapter *The Star*), which was formerly situated at Et-Tâif, where it was worshipped by the pagan Arabs. They say that the stone was placed in its present position by

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some of the Prophet's companions, so that the Muslimîn, entering or leaving the Mosque by this gate, might perpetually subject the former "god" to the indignity of being walked over. There is no inscription on the stone nor any carving, and I have no doubt that the Mekkan tale is merely a fable, especially as the people of Et-Tâif point to a broken stone in that town as being the remains of the idol El-Lât. It may be, however, that several idols of this name existed.

The Haram is crowned with seven minarets of whitened stone. At its western angle is the minaret of Bâb el 'Omra, which was originally built by El Mansûr in 139 A.H. The minaret of Bâb ez-Ziyâda stands beside the gate of that name. The minaret of Es-Sulaymânîya overtops the domes of the Law Court; while at the northern angle of the Mosque stands the minaret of Bâb es-Salâm, built in 168 A.H. These four spires are all on the north-western side of the Haram. On its north-eastern side is the minaret of Câit Bey, built in 880 A.H.; while at its eastern and southern angles respectively stand the minarets of Bâb Ali and Bâb el Widâ.

Noticing old Hasan the Zemzemi one morning, applying kohl to his eyes with the aid of a match-stick, I seated myself beside him at the door of his cave, and asked him how it was that a minaret came to be built so late as 880 A.H. when there already existed six spires. He told me that Câit Bey, Sultân of Egypt, on coming to Mekka to perform the Hajj in that year, suddenly took the idea of building a minaret near a school which he had founded, adjacent to Bâb es-Salâm. He gave orders that one was to be built before his return from 'Arafa. The time at their disposal being short, his slaves constructed a wooden tower on the roof of a house



INTERIOR OF THE GREAT MOSQUE AT MEKKA

In the left centre is the Kaaba with the arch called Bab Bani Shayba in front of it. To the left is the Zemzem building.

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near the school, and upon the Sultân's return there was the minaret with the muaddin in it, calling to prayer. Subsequently the wooden tower was replaced by the present stone structure, but the minaret still projects above the roof of a private house, of which it appears to form a part.

Immediately before the five times of prayer, the chief of the muaddins takes up his position on the roof of the building which covers the well Zemzem. Upon the arrival of the appointed hour he begins to chant the adân. At once the seven muaddins stationed in the minarets take up his cry, and follow closely one after the other, like the singers of a part-song.

Beyond the cloisters, the open quadrangle of the Mosque is strewn with a coarse gravel, which consists of the stones which have been thrown at the "devils" at Mina during the Pilgrimage. A number of stone footpaths extend across this gravelled space, and connect the pavement of the cloisters with the circular pavement which surrounds the Matâf. These footpaths are eight in number, with three subsidiary pathways; while opposite the Hataym there is a broad fan-shaped pavement, varying in breadth between fifty-five feet and a hundred and thirty feet.

On the edge of the granite pavement* which surrounds the Matâf, stands an isolated stone arch known as Bâb Bani Shayba. This is situated opposite to the door of the Kaaba, and in the other direction it faces the Haram gate called Bâb en-Nabi. The Bâb Bani Shayba stands on the site of the entrance of the original Haram. The width between the two columns which

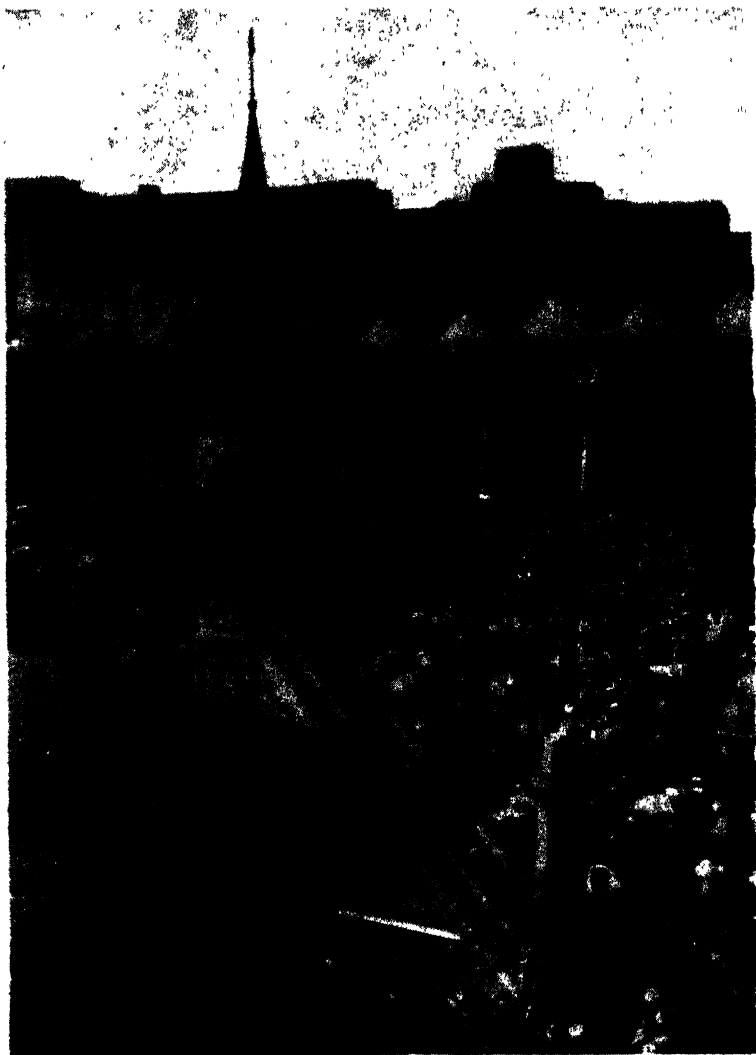
* This pavement has a single step in its middle, and may be compared to two very broad steps, the outer of which is eight or nine inches higher than the inner.

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support the arch is some fourteen feet, and the apex, which is slightly pointed, is some twenty feet above the ground. The lintel is inscribed with a Korânic verse. Pilgrims invariably step on the Matâf through this arch on the occasion of their first entry into the Mosque.

Between the Kaaba and the Bâb Bani Shayba is a small domed building, which stands on the marble pavement of the Matâf at a distance of forty feet from the Kaaba. (The Matâf sends out a square projection in this place.) This erection, which consists of six small pillars, some eight feet in height, supporting a domed roof and connected by ornamental iron-work railings, contains a square object with a pyramidal top, which is covered with an embroidered pall of green silk. It is some five feet square at its base. This object is a framework which covers the stone called El Hajar el Asad. When Abraham rebuilt the Kaaba he stood upon this stone, and the impress of his feet is said to be visible in it still, though I never met anybody who had actually seen the stone. The ground covered by the building is some ten feet square; and the place, the stone, and the building are usually referred to as Makâm Ibrâhîm (Abraham's Standing-place). After performing the towâf, the devotee prays a prayer of two prostrations, either behind the Makâm Ibrâhîm or in the Hîjr Ismayl (the space within the Hataym).

To the right of the Makâm Ibrâhîm, as one faces the Kaaba, stands a magnificent marble pulpit. This is constructed in the form of a long narrow flight of steps, enclosed on either side with a low wall, the top of which forms a hand-rail. At the bottom of the steps is a small door, which is kept locked save at midday on Fridays; and at the top is a little platform surmounted



THE MARBLE PULPIT IN THE HARAM OF MEKKA

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by a turret, the pointed roof of which rises nearly as high as the Kaaba. The whole is of marble, chiselled with decorative designs and inscriptions, and the roof of the turret is gilded. This pulpit was presented in 956 A.H. by the Turkish Sultân Sulaymân.

To the left of the Makâm Ibrâhîm stands the building which protects the well Zemzem. This is a small square erection, the sides of which face towards the cardinal points of the compass. In its eastern wall there is a doorway, and entering this the visitor finds himself in a small chamber measuring some fifteen feet in each dimension. The walls of this chamber are lined with marble of various colours, and in its centre stands a beautiful massive parapet of the same stone, circular in form, and shaped like a huge squat vase. This is the orifice of the Well. It is some seven feet in diameter and four and a half feet high, and is surmounted by an iron framework, in the top of which are pulleys for the bucket ropes. An iron grating at one side of the chamber protects a marble tank within an aperture in the wall. This tank is kept filled with water from the Well, so that the hâjjis may drink at any time, whether the water-drawers are present or not.

The Muslims believe that the water of Zemzem never abates in volume, but it is a historical fact that the Well became almost dry in 214 A.H., after which it was deepened by order of El Mamûn. On the night of the 14th of Shaabân in every year, the waters of El Kowthar, a river of Paradise, are believed to flow into the Well. The volume of water then rises to its mouth. The Mekkans recount the story of an Indian pilgrim who, from pious motives, jumped into the Well and died of repletion. A Jidda pearl-diver was sent down

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in order to recover his body, and upon coming up again he reported that the Well was fed by three subterranean streams—one flowing from the direction of Bâb es-Salâm; one from Bâb Jiyâd; and the other from Bâb en-Nabi. The Muslims believe that Zemzem water is the best medicine for every ailment. Its taste is faintly brackish, and its effect slightly purgative. When taken from the Well it is lukewarm.

The Zemzem building consists of two compartments—the well-chamber, and a closet in which are situated the stairs which give access to the roof, and in a part of which are kept brooms and other utensils. The roof of the building is a favourite position for prayer. A circular aperture, eighteen inches in diameter, in this roof gives ventilation to the well-chamber below.

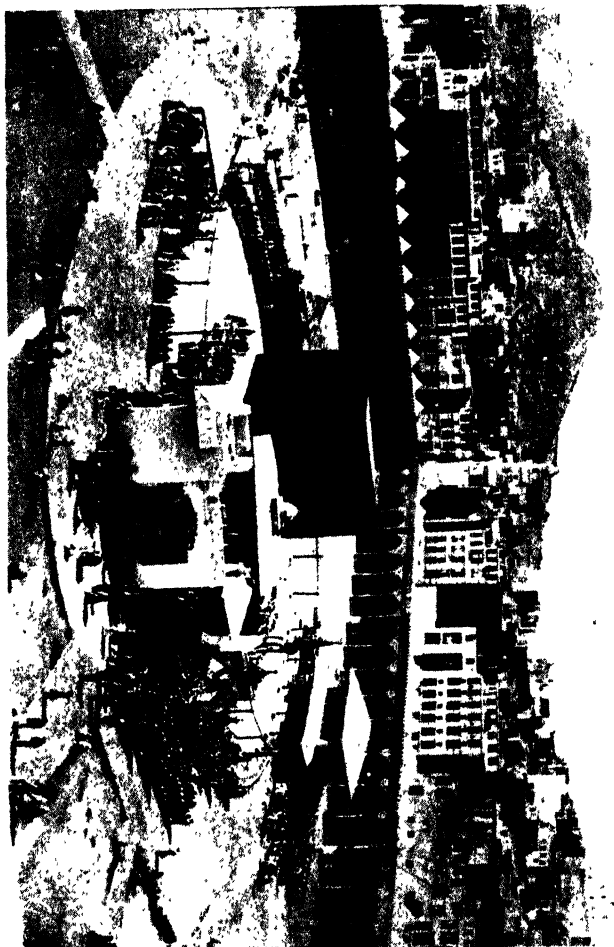
On the granite pavement, opposite the Hataym, stands a small pavilion raised on pillars. It is reached by means of a flight of wooden steps, and is some twenty feet long by fifteen feet wide. It is called El Makâm el Hanafî (the Hanafî Standing-place), because beneath it the Hanafî imâm stands when leading the prayers. In the upper storey, the muballigh* takes up his position.

The Makâm el Hanafî stands on or near the site of the old council-house of the Curaysh—called Dâr en-Nadwa—which now no longer exists.

The imâm of the Shâfi'is stands behind the Makâm Ibrâhîm, and his muballigh is stationed on the roof of the Zemzem building.

Opposite the south-western wall of the Kaaba stands a little pyramidal roof, supported on four posts. This is

* The muballigh repeats the words of the imâm in a loud singing voice, in order that the congregation in all parts of the Mosque may hear them.



THE HARAM OF MEKKA, LOOKING TOWARDS THE WEST

In the centre of the foreground in front of the Kaaba, stands the Zemzem building. To its right are the Bab Banu Shayba and the pulpit. The pavilion to the right centre is the Makam el Hanafi. In the distance is the mountain of J. el Fanna.

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the Makâm el Mâlikî, the standing-place of the imâm of that school. The fourth makâm, that of the Hanbalî school, stands opposite the south-eastern side of the Kaaba. It is similar in construction to the Mâlikî Makâm.

In the Mosque services one imâm leads the whole of the congregation, who are ranged in circular rows round the Kaaba. Thus it happens that some of the worshippers face the imâm, while others are behind him, and others on either hand. The imâms of the four schools lead the services by rotation.

Between Zemzem and the Makâm Ibrâhîm stand two broad wooden staircases mounted on wheels. One of these is plated with silver, and the other is handsomely carved. They were presented to the Mosque by Indian princes, and are used for the purpose of entering the Kaaba. One of them is wheeled up to the door of the House whenever a prince or other prominent personage desires to enter. At other times they are not used, as it would be difficult for the Shaybi to collect his toll if the rabble had a broad staircase up which to swarm in their hundreds. He prefers to leave it to his "youths" to hook up the promising candidates, while the ineligible mass does duty for the staircase.

Round the inner edge of the granite pavement extends a line of iron posts, some twelve feet in height. These support cross-bars, from which are suspended a number of glass-globe lamps—seven lamps between each two uprights. At present electric globes also depend from these cross-bars, and also from cross-bars between the columns which form the outer line of the colonnade of the cloisters. This electric system, which was installed by King Husayn, is worked by an internal combustion engine situated in a building in the Jiyâd.

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Two small buildings, called El Kubbatayn, mentioned by Burckhardt as being used as store-cupboards, no longer exist in the Mosque.

The religious service of the Mosque, and the menial service necessary for its upkeep and preservation, are performed by a large staff of employees. At the head of these is the Nâib el Haram. In Turkish times this official was appointed by the Sultân, and frequently held the rank of Pasha. He is designated as Nâib (deputy) because the governor of Mekka is nominally the chief, or shaykh, of the Haram. At present the Nâib el Haram is appointed by Ibn Sa'ûd himself.

The second officer, in order of precedence, is the Opener of God's House, who is always the head of the family of Bani Shayba. A Shaybi is never appointed Nâib el Haram, and nobody save a Shaybi may be appointed Opener of the House.

The Nâib is assisted by two or three lieutenants or supervisors, and under the latter there is a great host of lesser personages and actual performers of work. This work, though menial in itself, is performed with pride by the Mosque servants, for it is service performed directly for God about His Holy House. The Mosque servants have varied in number from time to time, according to the political situation, but there have been as many as eight hundred employed at one time. During the lean months of the Wahhâbî invasion, when Mekka was cut off from her usual sources of revenue, there were less than half that number attached to the Haram service. Formerly there were more than a hundred imâms and preachers, a hundred teachers of religious subjects, fifty muaddins, and hundreds of sweepers, lamp-cleaners, door-keepers, and water-drawers for the well Zemzem. Every one



ONE OF THE EUNUCHS EMPLOYED IN THE HARAM OF MEKKA

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of these people received a stipend from the endowment funds of the Mosque.

The care of the Matâf is the peculiar duty of a corps of fifty black eunuchs, who also act as the Mosque police. They are African negroes. They are known as Aghas, or, vulgarly, as Tawâshîs, and their chief takes rank after the Shaybi in order of precedence. The Aghas wear a special form of dress, which includes a jubba of any colour, with very long loose sleeves which hang down to the wearer's knees, completely concealing his hands. They wear very large white turbans, and also broad sashes, the ends of which hang down from the waist to below the knee. They usually carry each a long staff. Several of the Aghas are always present on the Matâf, and when engaged in that duty they wear white jubbas. Upon the smallest piece of dirt making its appearance on the marble pavement, two of them quickly take up a large metal jug of water, a metal bowl, a broom, a shovel, a pair of iron tongs, and a sponge, and proceed at once to remove the pollution. If this be a piece of solid matter—mud, gravel, paper, or similar object—one of the Aghas picks it up with the iron tongs, and drops it into the metal bowl. Then, one of them taking the broom, and the other the shovel, they sweep up any remaining particles. This accomplished, they pour water on the spot where the dirt has lain, and clean it thoroughly with the aid of the sponge. Almost constantly several of these eunuchs are to be seen sweeping the Matâf with long-fibred flapping brooms.

The reason why eunuchs are specially employed on the Matâf, and for police purposes is, that in the event of a disturbance occurring in which women are concerned, or in the event of a woman appearing on the

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Matâf in unseemly attire or in a state of uncleanness, they may handle such offenders and expel them without impropriety, as they are not really men in the full sense of the word. It is a shameful thing for a man to touch a woman who is not his wife or near relative, and in the Haram of Mekka such an act would be doubly shameful, as the majority of the learned say that all actions, good or bad, performed on that holy ground assume a greatly increased significance. What would be wicked in Cairo is thrice wicked in Mekka: what would be a mere display of bad taste in Bagdad would be an outrage in Mekka. Similarly a meritorious action is much more admirable at Mekka than elsewhere.

The first Khalîfa to institute the corps of Aghas at Mekka was the Abbâside, Abu Jaafar el Mansûr (136 to 158 A.H.), the builder of Bagdad. Many of the eunuchs have been presented to the Mosque by pious princes or other wealthy Muhammadans, but since slavery was officially abolished in the Turkish Empire, it has become the custom of the chief of the Aghas to buy likely boys with the aid of funds known as waqfs (religious bequests or endowments) which are placed at his disposal. The unfortunate youngsters are usually operated on before being sent out of Africa, as owing to the hazardous nature of the mutilation, the chief of the Aghas will not purchase them until they have safely undergone it.

The Aghas receive a very large income from waqfs (designated Owqâf el Aghawât), settled upon them by Muhammadans in many parts of the world. Their income from the neighbourhood of Basra is, or was, particularly large, and as their dues from that source were not forwarded to them in the year of my visit to Mekka, owing to the stoppage of the Hajj, one of them

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was despatched on a journey across Arabia to Basra in order to collect them. The Aghas expend their incomes in the upkeep of expensive establishments which, strange as it may appear, include wives and slave-girls, in addition to male attendants. They all live in the quarter of El Hajla, at the junction of Sûk es-Saghîr and El Misfala; and here the young boys live together in a large house, where they are instructed by the elders in religious matters and in their proper duties.

Owing to the official standing of the Chief Agha, he and his corps are treated with great veneration by the more simple hâjjis. I saw a eunuch, sitting on a raised place beneath the cloisters near Bâb es-Safâ, which is their favourite praying-place, summon an Indian hâjji with a lordly gesture and a brief word. The hâjji hastened to him, and grovelling on his knees, kissed the black hand of the Agha and awaited his commands in awed subservience. The middle-class Mekkans also invariably rise when addressed by an Agha, and treat him in every way as a superior.

The Aghas are nearly all repulsively ugly. They are usually of a startlingly emaciated appearance, tall, and terrifyingly bony. One or two of them, however, are handsome, and all exhibit an expression of supermundane aloofness. An Agha is usually followed by his slave, who picks up his sandals as soon as he discards them at the door of the Mosque, and remains at hand to await his master's orders. Technically, the Aghas belong to the Haram as part of its endowment, having been purchased with money of the waqfs, or presented as a waqf, and they could not buy their freedom if they wished to do so. They are God's slaves, and cannot be manumitted by man, nor leave the Mosque service for any other work. The fact that they

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possess property of their own, however, to the ownership of which no man may dispute their absolute right, proves that they are not as ordinary slaves, whose masters own, not only their persons, but everything they possess, no matter how they may have acquired it. In the ultimate resort, ownership of the Aghas would probably be adjudged as being vested in the Prophet's vice-regent—the Khalîfa; and through his favour an Agha might doubtless compass his own manumission. But apart from its sanctity, so exalted is their station in Mekka, as compared with any position they might reasonably expect to achieve elsewhere, that it is practically certain that the thought of leaving their present service never occurs to them as a rational possibility.

Mekkan women very seldom pray in the Haram, save on Thursday evening. On that day a number of them usually enter the Mosque just before sunset, and having performed the towâf, they congregate near Bâb Ali in order to join in the sunset prayer. After the prayer, those who were too late to perform the towâf before sunset accomplish that act of devotion. Then they leave the Mosque without tarrying. The foreign women who come to perform the Pilgrimage spend more time in the Mosque, as most of them perform the towâf every morning and evening. The Malay women, particularly, like to sit under the colonnade, and let their dark languid eyes dwell on the sunlit Kaaba in luxurious somnolence. The Wahhâbîs discourage the presence of women in the Mosque, even at prayer time. They do not obstruct female hâjjis,* but in the months when Mekka was empty of hâjjis, I have seen the Aghas, and also special guards from the Sharta, or

* The feminine form of the word "hâjji" is hâjja.

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City police, drive Mekkan women from the Haram with blows of their sticks. This could only be by order of the religious chiefs of the Ikhwân, whom Ibn Sa'ûd himself dares not oppose on matters of religious practice.

XVIII

PLACES OF VISITATION IN AND NEAR MEKKA.

THE Prophet's birthplace (Mûlid en-Nabi) is chief among the places in and about the Holy City which form the objects of pious visitation. This is situated in the ravine called Shiab Ali, near Sûk el-Layl. It stands in one corner of an open space, some forty yards square, between the ancient houses, and consisted, before the advent of the Wahnâbîs, of a small square mosque surmounted by a dome and flanked by a short minaret. A doorway in the north-eastern wall disclosed a flight of steps leading down to the floor of the building, some five feet below the level of the street. The mosque is divided by a wall into two chambers, each about thirty feet long by fifteen feet wide, and the right-hand one of these is again divided into two chambers of unequal size. The more westerly of these, which is also the larger, stands on the site of the room in which Muhammad is said to have been born. A circular hole, nearly a foot in diameter, in the marble floor is shown as being the actual spot on which the Lady Amina gave birth to the future prophet. In the western angle of this chamber stands the mihrâb.

The Wahnâbîs, true to their principles, demolished the dome and minaret of this building, and removed draperies and other ornaments from it. They also prohibited the hereditary custodians from sitting at its doorway to receive alms. Before their occupation of

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the Holy City, this placid occupation had furnished the principal source of income for a family of Sharîfs. Now, whenever the Mûlid en-Nabi was mentioned in a gathering of Mekkans, faces grew grave, and here and there among the company a bitter curse would be uttered against the Nejders. It became a point of duty for everybody who passed near the Mûlid to drive away any dogs which happened to be in its vicinity, for all knew that the custodians no longer dared to guard it, and the thought that the unclean beasts should enter and defile that sacred place filled Mekkans and hâjjis alike with shame and anger. It was dangerous to stand and look long at this or any other sacred site or building, for a passing Wahnâbî, seeing one so occupied, would be quite capable of laying about him with his camel-stick, calling down curses the while upon those who make supplication to the Prophet. The Wahnâbîs would have entirely prohibited visitation of the Mûlid, but the fact of its being a mosque enabled Abdul Azîz to prevail upon his 'ulemâ to persuade the wild men that there was nothing unlawful in its being used for the purpose of prayer and meditation. Consequently they left the gateway in the half-ruined walls unobstructed, and the Sultân gained credit with them for having allowed the dome to be demolished, and credit with the foreign hâjjis for protecting the place from complete demolition.

So violently have the Wahnâbîs re-acted against the lax Muslim custom of addressing supplications to Muhammad, that the less informed among them seem to an observer to be in danger of denying to him that honour which the 'ulemâ of every school admit to be his due. I have sat with Wahnâbîs who, when the Prophet's name was mentioned, have failed to join with

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the remainder of the company in saying "God bless him and give him peace," though this is commanded in the Korân. The Wahnâbîs are for ever repeating the first part of the Confession of Faith—"There is no god but The God"; but for every score of repetitions of this they hardly once say the second part—"Muhammad is the Prophet of God."

In the Masâ one day I saw an excited crowd close-packed around a fierce-looking Wahnâbî and a Mekkan. Upon making enquiry, I learnt that these two were disputing about Muhammad. The Mekkan had addressed a thoughtless word to the Prophet, saying simply "O Prophet of Allah," as many of the Muslims do when they are tired or worried or wonder-struck. Now, I heard the Wahnâbî say, "This my stick is better than Muhammad. Why better? . . . Because Muhammad is dead and gone, and can profit nothing; but this my stick has a use. It is more useful to me than is Muhammad." The Mekkan crowd burst into shocked murmurs of disgust, mixed with cursing. A fight seemed imminent when some of the Sultân's slaves approaching caused them to disperse.

Seldom do the Wahnâbîs, in speaking of Muhammad, call him "the Prophet" or "Allah's Messenger."

The birthplace of Fâtima (Mûlid Sitna Fâtima) is situated in the Zugâg el Hajar, which is in the quarter lying on the opposite side of Sûk el-Layl to Shiab Ali. This site is some thirty yards square, and is entered from Zugâg el Hajar through a small doorway in a stone wall. It belonged to Muhammad's wife, Khadija, and in it were born their children, of whom the Lady Fâtima is the best known. The ground inside the enclosure is four or five feet below the level of the street. On the left-hand side is a large room which was

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used as an audience chamber or mag'od; while on the right are three smaller rooms, the largest of which is that in which Fâtima was born. Of the remaining two, one was the private chamber of Muhammad and his wife, and the other was his praying-place. In the last, the Prophet received many of the revelations which compose the Korân. On one side of it there is a small depression in the ground, at which Muhammad is said to have performed his ceremonial ablutions. Behind these chambers lies an open courtyard extending the whole breadth of the enclosure. In this, Khadîja, who was a wealthy merchant, is said to have kept stores of merchandise.

The Prophet's praying-place and the birthplace of Fâtima were covered by small domes before the Wahhâbî occupation, but at the time of my visit these had been demolished, and lay in ruins. The entrance to the enclosure was blocked up with stones and mud, leaving only a small space at the top, through which the interior was visible. Near this doorway is the stone which spoke to the Prophet. It is built into the wall at a height of seven feet from the ground, but is at present indistinguishable from the other stones composing the wall, as the whole has been whitened by the obliterating hands of the Wahhâbîs. Another stone near-by is said to have supported the Prophet when he was fatigued.

Dâr el Argam, or Dâr el Khayzarân, is a house near Es-Safâ in which the Prophet and his few followers used to meet in secret for the purpose of prayer, at the beginning of his mission. It consists of two chambers, but as the door was kept locked by order of the Wahhâbîs I was unable to do more than obtain an unsatisfactory view of the interior by peering through the iron bars of a window.

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A number of other birthplaces of prominent companions of the Prophet are also visited by the hâjjis. Most of these have small mosques built over them, but nearly all of them have been partially destroyed by the Nejdiers.

The famous cemetery El Maala occupies twenty or thirty acres of ground at the northern end of the Mekkan valley. It is divided into two sections by the road which passes over the westward hill into the valley of El Hujûn. Each half of the graveyard is surrounded by stone walls, some five feet in height.

Here, according to tradition, are buried the Prophet's mother, Amina; his wife, Khadîja; and his ancestors, Abd Manâf and Abdul Muttalib, together with a number of the famous early Muslims. The mutawwifs have invented long supplications and pious exercises to be said at these tombs. These being outside the Prophet's practice are termed *bid'a* (innovation). The few tolerant men among the Wahhâbîs term these exercises "undesirable innovation," while the many intolerant Wahhâbîs call them rites of polytheism, alleging that those who practise them are according to the dead a degree of importance which pertains to God alone.

The tombs of these personages were formerly crowned by small but handsome domes, but these, without exception, have now been demolished, together with most of the tombstones. The guardians of each tomb, who formerly derived considerable incomes from the hâjjis, now no longer dare to spread their handkerchiefs on the ground to receive the pilgrims' alms. The cemetery is silent and deserted, save when a funeral party quickly bears in one more departed Muslim to join the millions whose dust lies there.



PART OF THE CEMETERY CALLED EL NAALA

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As far as I could gather, the deaths among pilgrims in Mekka during a healthy year, that is to say when the Hajj occurs neither in the season of greatest heat nor in the rainy season, and when no plague breaks out, number about two per cent. When the Hajj falls in the hottest season or in that of the rains, the proportion may be as high as five per cent; and when plague strikes the Holy City it may be anything. Plague excepted, the most fatal conditions in Mekka are those which obtain during the rains. The hâjjis and the Mekkans alike support dry heat in Mekka far better than they support humidity. In the wet season, the mortality among the natives of Mekka, men, women and children collectively, is probably about three or four per thousand every month. In addition to this, the mortality among newly-born infants is colossally high. At a time when there were no hâjjis in Mekka, and when, owing to the exodus of the city's inhabitants as a result of the Wahhâbî invasion, the resident population was as low as probably 60,000* souls, I have myself counted nine funerals in one day.

It might appear mysterious that so many could have been buried in so small a space, particularly as the Muslims bury only one body in each grave, and not half a dozen on top of one another as is done in Christian countries; and in view of the fact that a considerable part of the Maala is taken up by small stone-walled enclosures which are private to a number of Sharîfian families. I put this matter to the sitters in the coffee-yard at Birka one evening.

"Feel the ground under you, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Sabri.

* The normal resident population is probably rather more than double this number.

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I leaned down and placed my hand upon the ground, while all watched intently.

"Is it not hot?" asked Sabri.

"Yes, a little," I replied, for indeed it was not cold.

"You may dig down as far as you like," he said, "and the earth becomes hotter as ever you go deeper."

"Strange!" I said.

"Wallah!" said they, "the earth of Mekka is hot."

"This is the reason that the dead in the Maala never become overcrowded," said Sabri. "The earth is hot; and, with the heat, the bodies of the Muslimîn pass away into dust, and God alone knows what is the explanation of it."

"His glory and greatness!" they murmured.

"Not so, Amm Abdurrahmân?" cried Sabri.

"Ay, wallah!" replied Abdurrahmân, "and every six months they rake out the graves, and they find no bones . . . only dust; and then they bury the newly-dead in that same place."

"And on the Day of Resurrection, He will raise up all mankind though their bodies shall have become scattered dust," said Yûsef.

"Verily we belong to God, and unto Him we shall surely return," they quoted piously.

Jebel Abi Cubays, which is believed by the Muslims to be the first mountain created, is regularly visited by the hâjjis, and is usually one of the first points of interest about which they enquire. Soon after my arrival in Mekka I climbed this hill, in company with my host. Having reached the summit, Abdurrahmân and I sat down to view the Haram lying below us in the valley bottom. My companion quietly reversed an old discarded sandal which lay, sole uppermost, near us.

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This he did because it was "improper that a shoe should be turned upward to the Great Throne of God." In the Mosque, sandals are placed sole to sole on the ground, so that an exposed sole shall neither defile the sacred ground nor be uncovered to the sky.

Presently a man of a Syrian appearance came up from behind and, saluting us with peace, sat down beside us.

"There is the Kaaba below us," said Abdurrahmân; "mountains on our right hand, mountains on our left hand, mountains in front of us, and the houses of Mekka in the ravines between them."

The Syrian was silent, seeming sad. Presently he said: "O God! bless our Lord Muhammad, and his family, and his companions."

"What is wrong with you?" asked Abdurrahmân.

"Not a thing," said the Syrian. Then he said again: "O God! bless our Lord Muhammad, and his family, and his companions."

"What is the matter, O my uncle?" demanded Abdurrahmân again.

At last the Syrian said in a tone of dejection: "The Land of Egypt is wide and fruitful. The Land of Shâm is wide and fruitful. The Land of Turkey is wide and fruitful. Yet God Most High did not choose a better place for His House than this hole among all these rocks."

"God is more knowing!" said Abdurrahmân severely. Then, turning to me, he said, "True! the Land of the Arabs is barren. There is no tilth in her. But she is all minerals. In her are iron, and copper, and silver—even gold. Ay, wallah, all minerals!"

On Abi Cubays, behind the Mosque of Bilâl, there is a cleft in the rock which is known as the Place of the

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Stone. In this niche, it is said, the angels secreted the Black Stone immediately before the Flood. The rock closed over it, and protected it from harm until the waters abated, when Gabriel unearthed it and restored it to its place in the Kaaba.

Beside the Maala, and bordering the main road, stands a small dilapidated mosque known as the Mosque of the Genii (Mesjid El Jinn). At this spot Muhammad, being in the act of repeating the dawn prayer, was overheard in his chanting of the Korân by a party of jinn. A subsequent revelation mentions this occurrence. It forms the beginning of the chapter entitled *The Genii*:—

“Say:—It has been revealed to me that a party of genii listened to me, and they said ‘Verily we have heard a marvellous reading, pointing the way to rectitude: so we have believed in it, and we will not associate any other with our Lord.’ ”

In this excerpt, as throughout the Korân, God is represented as addressing Muhammad personally. . . . “O Muhammad! Say to the world as follows:—It hath been revealed . . . ”

The jinn are a race of beings supposed to have been created out of fire before the advent of mankind upon the earth. They partake of the nature of men and of angels, but are inferior to both. Like mankind, they are born, form sexual relationships, and die; and they need the sustenance of food. Like the angels, they are usually invisible to man, but they are able to assume human form or the forms of animals, and of strange monsters.

Belief in the existence of these or similar beings is

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pre-Islamic among the Arabs, but it has been regulated anew by the religion of Muhammad; and most of the other Islamic races have used this fact to account for, and to perpetuate, many of their own pre-Islamic superstitions. An example of this is found in the fearful unnatural beings which are believed to infest the lonely jungles of the Malay Islands. A case of a jinnî assuming human form is cited by the Malay Abdulla, in his "Autobiography." This spirit masqueraded as an Englishman to the Malays of Malacca. He at first appeared to be an ordinary officer of sepoy; but each day upon the conclusion of drill, instead of leaving the parade ground by way of the gate, he jumped his horse over a fence, which Adbulla says was seven cubits* high. Every day he did this marvellous thing, and the Malays became amazed, so that one man said to another: "This one is not of mankind," and another said: "This Englishman is of a truth a jinnî, and that is the reason he is able to do this act."

Upon the revelation of Islâm, many of the jinn became Muslims (*vide supra* the Korânic excerpt quoted), while others continued in unbelief. The latter are called shayâtîn (i.e. devils. Some of their activities have been narrated in Chapter XII). The captain of the devils is Iblîs, of whom it is doubtful whether he is himself of jinn-kind or is a fallen angel. In Chapter *The Cow* it is written:—

"When we said to the *angels* 'Bow ye down to Adam!' they bowed down; all, save Iblîs. He refused, and was arrogant, and became of the unbelievers."

Similar passages occur in Chapters *El A'raf* (the

* More than ten feet.

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partition between Paradise and Jehannam), *El Hijr* (the name of a city of the tribe of Thamûd, at present known as Madâin Sâlih, or the Cities of the Prophet Sâlih), *El Isra* (the Night Journey), and *Sâd* (a letter of the alphabet—hard s. Its meaning here is unknown).

In Chapter *The Cave* the story goes as follows:—

“When We said to the *angels* ‘Bow ye down to Adam!’ they bowed down; all save Iblîs, who was of the *jinn*, and transgressed the command of his Lord.”

From this it would appear that an angel may be a *jinnî*.

The word *jinn* is usually meant to imply the good *jinn*, that is to say, those who are Muslims. The bad *jinn*, who are unbelievers, are called *shayâtîn* (sing. *shaytân*), ‘*afârît*’ (sing. ‘*afârît*’), or *ghîlân* (sing. *ghûl*).

The Mekkans believe that the *shayâtîn* are not permitted to enter the Holy City, though, short of that, they may dwell within the sacred limits of the Haram. They tell tales of ‘*afârît*’, locally termed *Namnam*, which, assuming the form of wolves, steal children in the Yemen by night. They also tell of men who steal children in those parts in order to sell them as slaves in Mekka. There appears to be more than a suspicion of a connection between these two matters.

On the left-hand side of the road to ‘Arafa, at a distance of five miles from Mekka, there rises a mountain of a peculiar shape. An enormous steeply sloping mass, it is topped by a smaller mound of rock with almost perpendicular sides, and has nearly the precise appearance of a camel’s back topped by its hump. Near the summit there is a small cleft or cave in the

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rock, which is approached by a rough path. This mountain is known in history as Jebel Hirâ, but on account of the Prophet's having there received the first of the Korânic revelations, it is now known as Jebel Nûr (the Mount of Light). A tradition handed down from 'Âisha, one of the Prophet's wives, describes his first experience of revelation thus:—

The beginning of the Prophet's revelation was a vision seen during sleep. Whenever he saw this vision, it appeared to him as though the whiteness of dawn was breaking over him. Then he began to desire solitude, so having made ready a provision of food, he retired apart to the Cave of Hirâ, and devoted himself for many nights to the worship of God. Then he would return to Khadîja, and having procured further provision he would return to Hirâ for solitude once more. This he did until the revealed Truth came to him in the Cave of Hirâ. The manner of the first revelation was, that the Angel Gabriel came to him and commanded "Read!" Muhammad replied, "I cannot read." So the Angel took him and squeezed him hard, in order to arouse his energy, and then he released him, saying, "Read!" But Muhammad replied again "I cannot read." This went on until Muhammad had been thrice urged, and then, as he released him for the third time, the Angel said "Read! in the Name of thy Lord, Who hath created [all things]. He created man from congealed blood. Read! by the Most Beneficent—thy Lord, Who taught the use of the pen. He taught man that which he knew not." These sentences form the beginning of the Chapter entitled *Congeaed Blood*, and are believed, on the evidence of 'Âisha's tradition, to be the first of the Korânic revelation.

The tradition goes on to relate that Muhammad,

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with palpitating heart, went quickly home, and bursting in upon Khadîja, cried: "Wrap me up! Wrap me up!" So they wrapped him up, and presently his fright left him. Then he spoke to Khadîja, and told her what had occurred, saying: "I feared for my life." Said Khadîja: "Say not so! God will never disgrace you. Verily you are destined to bring together disunited kinsmen, to bear up the weak, to enrich the destitute, to honour the guest, and to assist in combating the calamities which threaten the Truth."

A large well is situated in the wâdi which runs at the foot of the Mount of Light, and on the slope of the latter there is a stone cistern, twenty-five feet by twenty feet by twelve feet deep, for catching rain-water. The cleft, or cave, of Hirâ was formerly inclosed within a small building. This building, having been built with a domed roof, is now no more. No dome which has the faintest connection with any dead person may continue to exist under the stern Wahhâbite order. The reason is found in a tradition of the Prophet forbidding the erection of buildings over tombs. As such buildings usually have domed roofs, the dome has become the architectural abomination of the Nejdiers.

Some six miles to the south-eastward of Mekka, on the road to the oasis of El Husayniya, a mighty mountain mass, known as Jebel Thowr (the Bull Mountain), rises to a height of over two thousand feet above the plain. Near its summit there is a cave known as the Cave of the Bull.

Muhammad, when persecuted by the inhabitants of Mekka, and threatened with death, fled from the city accompanied by the faithful Abu Bakr. Fleeing down

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the Misfala, they took the road to Jebel Thowr, and climbing its rough and nearly perpendicular side, hid in the cave. The pursuing Curaysh are said to have passed near the orifice, but seeing a spider's web intact across it, they passed it by. For three days Muhammad and his disciple hid there, until one named Abdulla ibn 'Urayca came to them with camels. Mounting on these, the friends fled to El Medîna, where they were well received.*

Very few of the Mekkans have climbed Jebel Thowr, on account of the difficulty of the ascent, and because, prior to the Wahhâbî occupation, the surrounding country was always infested with dangerous Bedouins. It took me an hour and a half to climb the mountain. The thirteen-hundred-years old path is scarcely discernible in many places, and presents a series of small precipices. The cave is situated at the top of a spur, considerably below the ultimate summit of the mountain. Beneath a great boulder there is a small opening, just large enough for a man to crawl through by lying flat on his stomach. What the cave is like inside I cannot say, as upon entering its night-dark interior from the sunlit glare of the outer world, I was unable to see anything. I did not remain within long enough to become accustomed to the darkness, but giving up the attempt to make a minute inspection, I made my way out again by wriggling through another small fissure opposite to that by which I had entered.

Every person who enters Mekka, whether he be a native of that city or a foreigner, is under the obligation to perform the ceremonies of either the Hajj or the 'Omra (the Visitation). The 'Omra is a supererogatory

* See Chapter X.

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duty to one who "intends" to perform the Hajj. But if a person wishes to enter Mekka, and does not intend to perform the Hajj, he must perform the 'Omra. It may, however, be shirked by the sacrifice of a sheep. The Muslim "intending" the 'Omra, assumes the ihrâm at the Haram limits, and upon reaching Mekka he performs the towâf, and the "running" between Es-Safâ and El Marwa. He then has his head shaved, and thus completes the ceremony. The 'Omra is performed at any season of the year, and at any time of day. Some of the more pious Mekkans frequently repeat it, especially on Ramadhân nights.

The boundary of the sacred territory runs nearest to Mekka at a place on the El Medîna road, called Et-Tan'îm, or more familiarly El 'Omra. It is to this point that the Mekkans resort when wishing to perform the rite of "Visitation." They usually assume the ihrâm before leaving Mekka, and since it is unnecessary for one in Mekka to go outside the Haram limits in order to ihrâm, their only reason for going to Et-Tan'îm is that they may imitate the Prophet, who at this place expressed his "intention" of performing the 'Omra, when he came from El Medîna.

Some time after the Pilgrimage, I performed the 'Omra, in company with Abdurrahmân and Sabri. Having bathed and assumed the ihrâm, we prayed the sunset prayer in the Haram, and then rode out on donkeys to Et-Tan'îm, passing through the quarter of Jarwal. Beyond Jarwal, the way lies through the Valley of the Martyrs. The track has been worn smooth by long use, and at intervals of four or five hundred yards there are square pillars, six feet in height, on which lanterns are placed during the nights of Ramadhân. These pillars act as sign-posts, and enable strangers to

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find their way when unaccompanied by guides. There are several wells along the route, and at the western side of the valley are situated a few scattered houses, one of which belongs to the Shaybi. Another, surrounded by lote and tamarisk trees, belongs to one of the Sharífs. Et-Tan'ím is situated on high ground some five miles from Mekka, and immediately beyond two wall-like pillars, similar to those at 'Arafa.

We performed ablutions with water drawn from a well, and prayed in a little mosque surmounted by three domes and open on its westward side. This being accomplished, we seated ourselves on a bench in the moonlight, outside a ramshackle coffee-booth, and ordered coffee. Moved to pleasant retrospection perhaps by the sweetness of the breeze blowing past from the north-west, Sabri made boast of an exploit of which he had been the hero. He said that, being with a party of friends on a day's outing in the Valley of the Martyrs, one of his friends had offered to wager him a guinea that he would not eat five pounds of meat, a melon of about the same weight, three loaves of bread, and a pound of honey, and then ride into Mekka and back again on a donkey. Sabri took the wager, dealt with the five pounds of meat, the melon, the three loaves, and the honey; secreted two limes in his belt; mounted the donkey and rode into Mekka. On the way he put a lime into his mouth, chewed it and swallowed it. Arrived in Mekka, he met two shaykhs at Bâb el 'Omra, who invited him to join them at their afternoon meal of fried meat and grapes. He ate with them, procured a written statement from them certifying that he had done so, ate another lime, mounted his donkey and rode back to the Valley of the Martyrs. On arrival there he had the satisfaction of witnessing

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the incredulous admiration of his friends. "But," he concluded sadly, "up till now, not a smell of the guinea has come to me."

Then my companions began to lament the poverty of the times, and to sigh for their former affluence. How in the days of the Sharîf 'Aun er-Rafîg, though thieves abounded, "gold lay about on the ground waiting to be picked up."

Riding back to Mekka in the starlight, we passed again the grave of Abu Lahab, and then entered the Jarwal. Having performed the towâf and the Saaya, we visited the barber and then discarded the ihrâm.

Among the pleasure resorts of Mekka is a ravine at the south-eastern extremity of Jiyâd, called El Masâfi. In the narrow bottom of this ravine, a small stream of clear water flows for several days after rain has fallen in the hills enclosing Mekka on that side. In the event of rain falling at intervals during a period of two or three weeks, as sometimes happen, this stream flows constantly during that period. It empties itself into a small lake which forms at such times in the hills at the head of Jiyâd. The basin which contains this lake is sufficiently large, and subterranean percolation is sufficiently rapid, to allow of its holding the water which flows into it without over-flowing, save on the occasions of very heavy rain.

Our coterie assembled one afternoon with the object of making an excursion to El Masâfi. We were accompanied by a youth named El Khamîs (Thursday), famous as a singer. Upon reaching the upper end of Jiyâd, we climbed over a rocky hill, on which were perched a few houses, and then descended a steep declivity to the bottom of the ravine. Here we were

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enchanted by the rare sight of a rippling stream. Many parties of Mekkans, with samovars for making tea, and some of their members smoking shishas, were scattered about on the flat rocks all along the hollow. The sun having now sunk low, the depths of the ravine were in shade. Selecting a place, we seated ourselves; and Abdurrahmân proceeded to assemble the parts of a tin samovar, which he had brought with him in a basket. At sunset everybody performed ablutions in the stream, and all along the ravine the companies formed in rows facing towards the Kaaba, in order to repeat the sunset prayer.

After this they seated themselves and prepared their tea; and then, as the stars appeared like suddenly lit lamps, they fell to singing songs. El Khamîs possessed a melodious voice, and he sang his verses, tapping the time on his tin tobacco box, while the others joined in the refrain. Some of their songs are of an amorous nature, and some are religious. They usually start with a religious chant, and then proceed with the other kind. Many of the latter have a short chorus, which is at first repeated by the company with mild enthusiasm; then, as the verses proceed, they yell it at the top of their voices, clapping their hands the while. These pursuits are indulged in with the utmost delight and excitement. By such simple means the Arabs become informed with the most realistic symptoms of intoxication. They then perform antics in which men of perhaps no other race will indulge without the stimulus of wine. They sing the choruses at each other, holding out their hands the while, or gesticulating with them, while they laugh and leer precisely as though they were light-headed. Then one or two of them will rise and execute the lascivious dance which is regarded as being

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proper to Egyptian women, while the others clap their hands wildly, or bang a tea-tray or similar object. All the while excited and obscene repartee is exchanged between them; and even the grey-beard will quaver out the tune with the youths. Suddenly decorum will re-assert itself, and they will sit again and commence to exchange normal gossip, while they sip at finjâns of tea, or inhale the smoke of the shîsha.

Our party had been badly frightened that morning by an aeroplane which had passed over Mekka, coming from the hostile camp of the Sharîf Ali, at Jidda. Three bombs had been dropped on the hills bordering the northern side of the Muâbda, with the object, doubtless, of hitting Ibn Sa'ûd's palace in the Abtah. I had heard from one of the government officials that the only damage which they did was to destroy the straw hut of a Takrûni, and slightly to wound in the leg an old black woman. I now told our company of this, and at once all their faces became anxious. Uncle Yûsef drew slowly at his shîsha, and its bubbling joined with the rippling song of the little stream as it hurried among the stones. The steep, rocky sides of the ravine rose above us, to where they became merged in the starlit wastes of the night sky. The moonlight picked out the yellow turbans and dusky faces of the Mekkans, so that they appeared like images raised on a dark background.

"Wallah, Hâjj Ahmad, we are frightened," said Hasan. "We went to the Haram when she flew over, so as to be near the House of God."

"Whether you go to the Haram or stay in the house, you will die if your hour has come," I said.

"Ha! good! that is true!" they exclaimed.

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"You wish for straight speech?" said Yûsef to Hasan.
"That is the straight speech!"

"But we are affrighted, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Sabri.

"It were better I had not told you of the bombs," I said. "Sabri will not sleep to-night, because of fear."

"Take up two girbas of water onto the roof with you to-night, O Sabri!" said Hasan sagely. "And if a bomb comes. . . . Up, quick! and pour the water over it!"

"Will that work?" asked Sabri anxiously.

"Allah is More Knowing," replied Abdurrahmân.

El Khamîs began to sing softly one of his amorous ditties; and at the end of every second line they all joined in the chorus:

"Night descending, cloaks the valley;

Come not, O Dawn! my beloved is with me."

Presently we wandered slowly homeward in the moonlight.

The Mekkans frequently form parties, and hiring or borrowing a house which has a garden or courtyard, they spend the whole day there—eating, drinking tea, smoking, singing songs, and telling tales. Before the Wahhâbî invasion, such parties occasionally made use of intoxicating liquors, and when under the influence of the resulting inebriation, pæderasty was sometimes practised among them. Women are never admitted to a gathering of men. Among the Mekkans, as in other communities, there are persons who are addicted to vicious practices; but the Holy City was never at any time the abandoned haunt of iniquity and vice that some writers, among them Arabs with Wahhâbî sympathies, would have us believe. It must be borne in mind that plural wiving, and even capricious divorce, slave concubinage, and one or two other practices which are repugnant to the

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Western mind, are not sins in a Muhammadan country, but are normal proceedings allowed by the law, and are therefore not immoral even though some of them may be "disliked" (*makrûh*). During my residence in Mekka, I observed less of the obvious signs of indecorum than I have seen in any other town which I have visited. I am convinced that this fact was not wholly accounted for by the presence of the Wahhâbîs. Several individuals were imprisoned for being in possession of spirituous liquor, and one for being found in the company of a woman who was not his wife. A case occurred of a man being murdered in the course of a game of cards, played for money. In Mekka, murder is a compound crime. In addition to being wilful manslaughter, it is a violation of the law of sanctuary.

Those who knew Mekka both in Turkish times and in the time of King Husayn agree that the Arab sovereign was a strictly moral man. The vices of drinking, gambling, prostitution, pæderasty, and so on, to which certain classes of the Mekkans were addicted during the Turkish régime, were sternly punished by King Husayn. His faults appear to have been merely Arab characteristics of temperament, carried to an uncomfortable extreme. He is blamed for his ambition, vainglorious pride, obstinacy and avarice. He was a Muhammadan of some learning, and scrupulous in the observance of his religious duties; but the sudden rise in his fortunes, as an ally of the victors in the Great War, unbalanced him and over-shadowed those qualities of mellow wisdom and tranquillity which are the most charming attributes, and the greatest strength, of one who is advanced in years.

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The favourite pleasure-resort of the Mekkans is Et-Tâif. In the hot months, unless the Pilgrimage occurs in that season, all those who can afford the expense go to the hill town, where they may saunter among orchards of fruit trees and by the side of green fields of growing grain, which are little inferior in luxuriance to the cultivated districts of Syria.

At a distance of some twelve miles to the south-eastward of Mekka there is an oasis known as El Husaynîya. It belongs to the Sharîfian family of Dawi Ghâlib. Having been invited by a member of that family to visit the oasis, I set off one morning accompanied by Abd esh-Shukûr, mounted on donkeys. Riding down the Misfala we passed Birkat Mâjid, and soon afterwards turned off to the left over a narrow pass. The track wound through several sandy valleys in succession, until finally it began to rise gently, and we emerged upon a broad plain covered sparsely with grey-green camel grass. The road passed along at the foot of Jebel Thowr, and presently, breasting the highest point of the plain, we saw before us a far-reaching valley sloping gradually to the oasis. The slopes of the hills bore a thin film of vegetation—the sudden result of the rains—and the bottoms of the ravines were filled with young herbage, set between the black and yellow rocks and sand. This coming to life of the sun-scorched desert is almost as sudden as the clearing of summer skies after a storm. The wilderness was dead a few days ago, the thorn bushes dry and black; even the camel grass had turned a faded yellow. Now the hollows were green, and the scrub on the hill-sides was covered with shoots. This is one of the few surprises of pleasure which Arabia gives to the

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traveller. "God sendeth down water from the sky, and maketh the earth to live after that it was dead," says the Korân. Green finches fluttered about, and lizards of aquamarine, a foot long, sunned themselves on the rocks.

Almost as quickly as this spring herbage appears in the burning valleys about Mekka, it disappears again. To-day it is in its virgin hue; in a week's time, failing new rain, the Arabian sun will have turned it yellow and dry.

At the oasis we found five sons of Sharaf Pasha. They were living in a square canvas tent pitched within the walls of a ruined house on the side of a low hill. One of them, with the magnanimity displayed by these noble families of the Arabs, refused to allow Abd esh-Shukûr to attend to my mount, but led it away himself. Inside the tent the ground was furnished with carpets, upon which were deposited several camel saddles and a pile of small mattresses. A number of rifles and swords hung from the tent-poles.

The oasis of El Husaynîya lies in the bottom of a great basin in the hills. This basin is some six or seven miles in diameter. A perennial spring, issuing from a point in the foothills on its north-eastern side, sends a constant, though not a copious, stream of water down into the oasis. The latter lies in an extremely low position, and is famed for the insalubrity of its atmosphere, and for the great numbers of mosquitoes which infest it. The oasis is separated into three parts by two low hills which lie in the bottom of the basin, with an interval of a mile between them. These two hills, and the three patches of cultivation, lie in a straight line, extending roughly from west to east. The most westerly part of the oasis, which is also the largest, is

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properly known as El Husaynîya. The central part, which lies between the two hills, bears the name El Buhayrîya, and the eastern part is called El Mânaîya.

The water from the spring flows through a small stone aqueduct, which passes along the southern extremities of El Mânaîya and El Buhayrîya until it reaches El Husaynîya. At each of the three patches of cultivation, the aqueduct is fitted with a water-gate.

The area of El Husaynîya may be forty acres, and that of the other two parts twenty acres each. There is a much larger area of ground which is capable of being cultivated, but the available water-supply is insufficient for more than the eighty acres which are tilled.

This oasis has been cultivated from time immemorial, and it is second only to Wâdi Fâtîma in importance as a source of Mekka's vegetable supply. Hibiscus, egg-plant, radishes, tomatoes, vegetable marrows, spinach, and the mallow plant called mulûkîya, are grown here, besides birsîm for horse and donkey fodder. There are a few date palms and banana trees, but no other fruits. Mekka depends for its fruit supply on the orchards of Et-Tâif. A number of tiny stone huts, the habitations of the peasants, are scattered about the plain.

The eldest of the five brothers, Sharîf Râjih by name, told me that in the time of Abdul Muttalib, Sharîf of Mekka in 1297 A.H., petrol had been discovered near the eastern part of the oasis. By order of the Sharîf, the hole from which the oil flowed was closed again, and its exact position was now unknown. There is also a well in one of the valleys running eastward towards Jebel Kurâ, which emits the odour of

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petroleum, and the water of which is defiled by an oily scum. Abdul Muttalib's reason for ordering the obliteration of the signs of petrol was the fear, which is universal among the Muhammadans, that the known presence of minerals would attract unbelievers into the sacred territory.

The oasis was improved by the warlike Ghâlib, Sharîf of Mekka, 1202-1227 A.H., who built a small castle in the midst of the western part. He also built several watch-towers on the foothills which overlook the plain. Ghâlib did not rely solely upon the Arab tribes to fight his battles. He is said to have purchased several thousands of slaves, whom he caused to be trained in the use of arms. Râjih, speaking with pride of his ancestor Ghâlib, said that he never moved out of Mekka without an escort of a thousand armed slaves or mamlûks. He made war on the Sultân of Dar'ayya in Nejd, thereby bringing upon the Hijâz the first Wahhâbî invasion, in 1802 A.D. When the Wahhâbîs entered Mekka, they sent a detachment to destroy Ghâlib's castle in El Husaynîya. The stronghold was defended by four hundred of the Sharîf's military slaves, who refused to surrender. After a siege of six months it was taken, and every soul in it was then put to the sword. The castle was demolished by the Nejders, and has remained in ruins ever since.

Having lunched with the ash râf and walked round the fields of growing vegetables, and inspected a couple of horses, one of which, a hollow-backed grey of uncertain age, formerly belonged to King Husayn, I mounted and rode back through the cold evening air with Abd esh-Shukûr to Mekka.

Beyond El Husaynîya, in the opposite direction, the road passes by way of Baydhâ and Saadîya to El Lîth.

XIX

FIRST DEPARTURE FROM MEKKA

DURING the latter half of November and the early part of December of 1925, large numbers of Wahhâbîs came into Mekka from the east. They came in fives, and in tens: they came in parties of several hundreds. The valley of El Abtah, from Ibn Sa'ûd's palace to the dam at the foot of Jebel Nûr, was crowded with their tents and dromedaries, their saddlery and arms. Large numbers of these warriors were sent on to the army besieging Jidda, the headquarters of which were at Er-Raghâma, a place on the Mekka road at a distance of six or seven miles from the besieged town. Every day new levies of these wild Bedouins came riding in on their deluls in a ceaseless stream—summoned from the wilderness by the messengers of Ibn Sa'ûd. Eager they looked, but stern; their loot-lust held in check for the moment. In their ordinary existence, the Ikhwân care little for the goods of this world. Some of them, in their moments of religious enthusiasm are said to have given away their camels and other property and to have found a new pride in possessing nothing in the world save the clothes they wore. But when war is in the air, the old hereditary instinct stirs within them, and masters their asceticism. This was amply demonstrated by the circumstances which attended the capture of Et-Tâif; although Ibn Sa'ûd and his minions sought to exonerate the Ikhwân from responsibility by throwing the blame for the murder

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and rapine which occurred upon the freelance Bedouins who joined them in the attack. To the inherent lust for plunder, has been added, in the case of the Wahhâbîs, a lust of violence against all who do not see eye to eye with them in matters of religious practice.

Riding, one day, beyond the Abtah, I had stopped my donkey for a moment in order to look at a half-ruined house built by the Sharîf Ghâlib. A Wahhâbî, passing on foot, accosted me with the remark: "You think this a good house?" He probably thought that I was worshipping the stones, or communing with the spirit of the departed Ghâlib. Many have been cut across the head with a camel-stick for arousing a similar suspicion.

"No, my boy!" I replied. "It is a disgusting house."

"Are you of the people of Mekka?" he asked me next. His face still wore the dour scowl which the sun, and disapproval of the world in general, give to the brothers' faces. They may not harbour admiration for anything in this wicked world, for fear they should "associate" other things with Allah. I have sometimes wondered what a Wahhâbî does and says when he makes love to his wife.

"No!" I told the brother. "I am from the north." Then I said: "Tell me about the way of the Brethren in religion."

"We serve none other than God!" he replied, "and we do not associate anything with Him!"

"Only thus?" I commented. "But what say you concerning tombs?"

Intently he eyed me, his stern eyes flashing distrust; from underneath his dirty red kefiya flowed the long rusty ringlets of his hair.

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I smiled broadly and took his hand. "I like the Ikhwân," I said. At once his expression softened, and he too smiled. Arabs, fickle as the wind, they are easily won over to gentleness, and as easily goaded to murder.

"I am an ignorant man," said he. "I know nothing."

This was the speech which had been put into their mouths for use in their intercourse with foreign hâjjis and Mekkans; for their Sultân desired no gratuitous bloodshed. I could get no further word on religious matters from my friend, and upon enquiring his name I was answered: "I am a brother of the Brethren." Sad to relate, all this strangeness is merely a result of ignorance of the world, added to the skilful manipulation* of religious teaching by their leaders. A highly educated religious fanatic may be a magnificent being, but liberal education and liberal diet would merely turn the Ikhwân into effendis.† A Nejder from the Wahhâbî province of El 'Âridh who had studied in Egypt and travelled in India and Java, and whom I met in Mekka, was far more enthusiastic in his praise of western civilization—knives, forks, chairs and pictures, included—than are some Europeans.

On the fifth of December, El Medîna surrendered to the Wahhâbî forces, and a fortnight later the Sharîf Ali ordered Jidda to be surrendered also, and himself took refuge on a British warship. There is no doubt that Ibn Sa'ûd had at last made up his mind to

* By unduly stressing certain Korânic verses while passing lightly over others.

† In the Levant, the Turkish word "effendi" means "gentleman," in the sense of a man who is smartly dressed and superficially polite. The effendis of Egypt and Syria are those who wear European suits and tarbûshes, while those who wear jubbas and turbans are termed "shaykhs."

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attempt the storming of the town, which his Bedouins had had under siege for fifteen months. There would have been a good deal of bloodshed, but had Ali possessed a considerable number of machine guns, handled by resolute men, the Ikhwân would probably have failed in the attack, as they possessed no artillery capable of seriously damaging the walls.

I had now been confined in Mekka for more than six months, and the thought of the open desert, with its clean air as of the sea, appealed to me every day more insistently. Sometimes, standing in the depth of the Mekkan valley, I looked upward to see clouds flying over the rim of the basin. Beyond the walls of the imprisoned city, winds came buoyantly from the unseen horizons; but down where I stood stagnation reigned. Again clouds would blow across the sky—like banners rallying to freedom out on the open plains. The hour of departure had come. Sitting in a niche in the Haram wall, I conferred with one Ali, a Bedouin of the tribe of 'Atayba, who had settled in Mekka as a dealer in livestock. He would accompany me to the upland oasis of Et-Tâif, and would hire camels for our journey. I had long wished to visit Et-Tâif, the place of orchards and rose-gardens; but I had become so interested in Mekka and her people that even the humid heat of the autumn could not drive me away from the Holy City. El Medîna, the second of my great objectives, was now open; but nevertheless, I determined that I would journey up to Et-Tâif and return again to Mekka, before setting out for the Prophet's City.

Upon a Friday, after the midday prayer, I mounted the crumbling stone stairs of the school el Madrassat el Fakhriya, which stands beside the Bâb Ibrâhîm,

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in order to visit an acquaintance who was employed as a schoolmaster there. As we sat sipping tea beside a window looking into the Haram, we were surprised to observe a sudden rush of people towards Bâb es-Safâ. They were evidently attracted by something which was happening near that gate.

Rising, we descended the steps and passed into the Haram. Making our way towards Bâb es-Safâ, we came upon a great press of Mekkans and Bedouins. In the midst of them was one of the Haram preachers, perched upon a little wooden platform or pulpit, apparently addressing the multitude. Elbowing our way into the crowd, we were able to see Ibn Sa'ûd sitting in a prepared place near the gate. The preacher was addressing to the Sultân a speech of adulation. Presently he made an end, and then several of the Ashrâf, the Shaybi, and other prominent Mekkans in turn, took the Sultân's hand and acknowledged him King of the Hijâz. Ibn Sa'ûd received these advances with his usual cordial smile, and upon the conclusion of the ceremony he rose, and accompanied by his armed guards, made his way slowly through the crowd towards the Kaaba and proceeded to perform the towâf. Having completed this, and prayed two prostrations in the Makâm Ibrâhîm, he left the Mosque and went to the Hamîdiyya where he held a general reception.

Instead of following the crowd to the Hamîdiyya, I seated myself in the cloisters with my companion. The sun had lost something of its summer savagery, and the air was cool. Suddenly one of the old guns in the Fort of Jiyâd boomed, and was immediately followed by another on Jebel Hindi. The troops of the garrison were saluting the new king. A hundred and one times the peace of the city was broken.

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An old shaykh, named Umar Balâtas, who taught Malay students, hobbled up and sat down beside me. Having made himself comfortable, he gave thanks to God, and fumbled for his string of beads.

"What is this gunning?" said he. "Think you that God has need of guns in His City?"

We murmured sympathetically.

"These fools have acclaimed the Sa'ûdi," he continued. "But of a truth, they love him not. Why do they acclaim him? I tell you, merely for personal advantage."

"Nothing against them," said my friend mildly, "kingship belongs to God alone."

"No other," said Umar. "The rule of the Turks has passed away; the rule of El Husayn has passed away; the rule of the Sa'ûdi will pass away; but the rule of God remains—He is the Everlasting."

They murmured praise to The Everlasting God, while the decrepit guns in the forts still crashed out. A young sharîf of my acquaintance, named Zayd, approached and sat down with us. He was accompanied by another, wearing the white turban of the scholar.

We touched hands.

"They have acclaimed the Sa'ûdi," said Zayd.

"The curse of God on the Sa'ûdi," said his companion with careful venom.

"But security!" said my friend the schoolmaster. "Was there, in the days of the Turks or in the days of El Husayn, protection such as this? We heard of one who dropped his baggage on the Jidda road, and knew it not till he reached Mekka. So he went back to look for it, and there it was—lying in the way, Wallah, untouched! and the Bedouins riding away

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from the track so as not to touch it—for fear of the Sa'ûdi!"

"True!" said Zayd, "and we heard from Abu Khâlid that his brother Hasan, the money-changer, came from Jidda with four hundred pounds in gold, and he was alone and no one accosted him in the way."

"Wallah, security!" said my friend. "We have never seen the like of it."

"Take hold of thy beard!"* said old Umar. "Say-yidna (i.e. King Husayn) was better. These call the Muslimîn unbelievers."

"God curse them!" they cried—all save the school-master, who said: "We have no need of El Husayn, nor of the Sa'ûdi, nor of another. God ruin the houses of all of them—those who make war in His Holy Land."

Ibn Sa'ûd had repeatedly expressed his intention of retiring to his deserts as soon as he had driven the family of King Husayn out of the Hijâz. Had he done so it is probable that the Hijâzis would not have invited him to return as their king.

The Muslims go to Mekka for no other reason than that Allah has ordained that every man who is able shall perform the Pilgrimage before he dies. Very few orientals are really curious or enterprising. For a man who is in comfortable circumstances to journey into far countries, merely for the delight of seeing unknown places and of observing the customs of strange races of men, is almost unheard-of among them. Present poverty and the hope of worldly gain, to be acquired either by war, by trade, or by begging, are, as a rule, the only incentives which will move an oriental to

* As a sign that he will not be angry at what the speaker is about to say.

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leave his native soil. Even the Bedouin Arab, who spends all his life in wandering from place to place, is usually ignorant of any district outside his own tribal territory. So strong is the religious sense of orientals, however, that their natural indolence seems to vanish completely when they are confronted by a divine ordinance.

To all the Muhammadans except the Arabs, Mekka is almost a terrifying place. But they are imperatively commanded to go there, and every time they read that command in the pages of the Koran the idea of the power of Allah and His wrath strikes on their unquiet minds. They cannot rest in peace until they obey. Once embarked upon the perilous Pilgrimage, the hardships and dangers which they encounter in the way become transformed, both for those who sink under them and for those who survive, into a long splendid penance before the Face of Allah.

The pilgrim enters at last among the easeless sun-scorched habitations of Mekka, where ragged grim-faced Arabs proudly pace in the dust of the crooked streets, and whence the biers of the dead are borne out every day to the hot unshadowed grave-yard. The stark horror of life there may for a moment strike terror into his heart. But now he enters the court of the Great Mosque, and at once he sees before his eyes the very House of Allah. The Centre of the World, the House of Allah! At once his terror, his physical fear, becomes sublimated into a great confiding fear of Allah. With this is mixed a supreme elation, for the devoted pilgrim has not only rendered obedience to the divine command, but he has survived all the dangers and hardships and come triumphantly through them to the very end of his task. Perhaps he is like a woman in the

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arms of a strong and masterful lover—trusting and acquiescent, yet withal fearful. Standing there, clinging passionately to the black pall which covers the House of Allah, the pilgrim feels in a new mystical way that he stands before the Face of God.

Devotees such as these take little thought of the hardships of their task. Their terrible earnestness should make a strong appeal to the better feelings of all with whom they come into contact. Yet it seldom has done so. Until quite recently the pilgrim has been regarded by sailors (European as well as oriental), merchants, camel-drivers and all others as a fair butt for rapacity or wanton cruelty. Not the least unjust of his oppressors was the Sharíf of Mekka himself, the Guardian of the Holy Places. This potentate was imitated by his officers and officials, and by the majority of the people of Mekka. The simpler sort of pilgrim was looked upon by all these as a sort of sheep—to be fleeced as completely as possible, and then turned adrift to be buffeted by all to whom he applied for alms.

Since the Wahnâbîs took Mekka, all this has been changed, and the pilgrim gets fair treatment. The natural hardships, however, remain, as they must continue to do in so barren a country as Arabia.

Ibn Sa'ûd has taken the Hijâz largely at the urge of personal ambition. But he is too great a man to be merely self-centred. He possesses a fine sense of justice, and under his rule every man may claim and will get his due. Yet it is curious that with all his deep knowledge of the Arab mind, and his great personal charm and self-command, he is not really loved by the townsmen of Western Arabia. There is in him something of the hard Bedouin character. This it is, doubtless, which has largely ensured his worldly success. I never

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heard of his walking about Mekka alone and unattended and exchanging gossip with pedlars and shopkeepers, as King Husayn was wont to do. If any man desires to speak to him he must go to his public audience-hall.

He is probably the best ruler that Arabia proper has known since the days of the first four Khalîfas; and if he keeps his balance, in spite of success, he may do her much good.

Some days later Ali informed me that he had prepared everything for our journey to Et-Tâif. He had hired a couple of deluls from a camel-dealer, who was taking six of these animals to Et-Tâif.

I performed the towâf, and after the hour of el 'asr I made my way towards the Abtah, where Ali was to meet me with the camels. I was accompanied by Abdurrahmân, Shafîg, Hasan, Abd esh-Shukûr and Abdul Fattâh. Abdul Fattâh carried a clay bottle of Zemzem water, and a poor man carried my saddlebags and other gear.

I had put on a Bedouin mantle, with head-kerchief and hair-rope 'agâl, as is the custom of some of the town Arabians when they travel.

Coming to the Hashîsh-smoker's coffee-house, we entered and sat on benches in order to drink together a parting finjân of coffee. Presently we went forth again, and wandered on to El Abtah, where we met Ali.

The sun was now setting behind Mekka in a blaze of orange, and a cold wind began to rise. The ravines among the black mountains, which bordered the broad white bottom of the valley winding eastward, were filled with blue mist. Above them, the sky had turned to pale green.

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Forming in a row behind Abdurrahmân, we repeated the sunset prayer; and having come to the end of this, Ali and I prepared to mount. The two Bedouins, Kharîs and Talâl, with whom we were to travel, had already mounted; and now, driving two spare camels loose before them, they moved off into the dusk. The voice of one of them came out of the darkness, calling to us to join them.

"Drink, O Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdul Fattâh, offering me the clay water-bottle, "drink a little of Zem-zem."

I took the bottle, and having drunk, handed it back again to the smiling youth.

"With health," said he.

"God give you health," I replied.

Night was fast coming on. Already the stars glittered low above us—like lamps on long chains, suddenly let down.

I took their hands in turn. Shafîg commenced to chant the adân—"Allah Akbar: Allah Akbar: Allah Akbar . . ."

"With safety!" said Abdurrahmân. "God show me thy face in safety again."

"God keep you!" I rejoined, and again: "In the keeping of God."

Shafîg's voice, chanting the adân, still echoed in the chilly darkness: "I testify that there is no god but The God. . . ."

I mounted into the saddle, and at once the animal rose and moved slowly forward.

"Peace be upon you, brothers," I said.

"And upon you be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings."

Hasan ran to take my hand again as I sat aloft. Ali had mounted his camel, and now the animals moved

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on to follow their companions. A moment more, and the white-clad forms of the Mekkans had receded into the darkness.

“Lâ ilâha ill Ollawh!” The voice of Shafîg came faintly, chanting the final words of the adân.

A moment more, and we were alone in the dark valley, Ali and I, moving eastward.

XX

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IN the darkness of early night we were riding in labyrinthine ways, among the steep bases of the black mountains which mark the line between the Tihâma and the uplands of Central Arabia. A turn of the narrow valley had long since hidden the last little lights of Mekka's easternmost market-place (Sûk el Maala); and in my mind, reaching eagerly to a new freedom, the consciousness of the old city was already fading into unreality. Behind us lay Mekka. Nearer lay the Mount of Light—a sombre black shadow under the western stars. At its foot, the circular parapet of the well Bîr Barûd glimmered faintly; and before this extended a long low dam of stone, whose purpose is to deflect the floods from Mekka. Flowing to the northward, by devious barren ravines to Bîr el Ghanam, the waters eventually drain into Wâdi Fâtma. Our route lay eastward up the dry bed of the watercourse. In front of us stretched a valley of pale glimmering sand, winding among the buttresses of dim mountain masses. On either hand rose black shadows. Above us, the spangled indigo space of the sky stretched from peak to opposite peak of the overhanging mountains. The young moon was already hidden by the mountains to westward. The only sound was the soft "sish-sish" of the camels' feet in the sand, like the word *silence* repeatedly whispered.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a harsh voice;

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and almost immediately, out of the dimness ahead, five gaunt dromedaries came running. On their backs rode Arabs, bareheaded and swathed in scanty white coverings. As they flitted past in the starlight, thwacking the hollow ribs of their spectral beasts, they cried, "At Thy command, O God! Here am I!" with a slow throaty utterance. And one of them cried, "At Thy command, O God! Akhs! tobacco! O dog! At Thy command, O God! Here am I!" For, at the moment of their appearance, my companion, Ali, was smoking a cigarette, and these were Wahhâbîs. Ali hastily extinguished his cigarette, and we pressed forward without speaking, but the darkness closed quickly behind the white-clad riders, and they did not return.

We had left Mekka after sunset. My companions were Ali the 'Ataybi, Tallâl and Kharîs, Bedouins of the tribe of Banî Sufyân, poor but of noble lineage. Our intention was to travel to Et-Tâif by way of the Wâdi-l Yemânîya. Each of us rode on a delul, and the Bedouins drove two more of these animals before them in the way. I travelled, as I had lived in Mekka, as a native of the country. I took my notebooks with me, as these were too precious to be left out of my reach; but I had nothing else which a native of Mekka might not have carried.

As our camels paced forward we left the water-course and entered a valley which became gradually wider, until the inclosing hills receded from sight into the darkness on either hand. We now found ourselves on the threshold of a broad sandy plain, and all about us the white expanse of the ground was broken by clumps of camel grass and of the rue plant called Harmal, from which the Arabs brew an aperient

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decoction. Occasionally, thorn bushes appeared, coming out of the dimness ahead; or they came upon us un-awares, scratching at us with thin clutching hands, and passed again into the gloom behind us. Trotting steadily across the plain, we came, after midnight, to the hills which bordered its eastern side. These rose dimly before us. As we entered among the foothills, we passed on our right a small isolated rock, bearing some resemblance to a couched camel. It is known as En-Nâga, the She-camel. Passing this, we threaded our way between low hills of rock for two hours. The track then entered a narrow ravine, and beneath the feet of our deluls the ground exhibited an uneven surface of rock, rising steeply. This passage, which in places would scarcely permit one rider to pass another, is known as El Mudarraġ. At certain points, the stones form a series of rough steps. Slowly our camels stumbled to the top of the rise, and then commenced a long descent to the village and oasis of Sola, which we reached before dawn.

Sola is situated at the confluence of the two great watercourses known as Wâdi Esh-Shâmîya and Wâdi El Yemânîya—the Northern and the Southern. The former of these takes its rise to the northward of Mekka, at about half way between that city and El Medîna. Its central reach, from a place called El Mudhîġ, to the point where it is joined by the Yemânîya near Sola, is known as Wâdi Lîmûn. Thereafter, it flows by way of ‘Ayn Jedîda, ‘Ayn Mubârak, Ez-Zubâra, Tarfa, El Khalas, Abu ‘Irwa, ‘Ayn El Jumûm, and Hadda, to the coastal plain at Bahra. The lower reach of the wâdi, extending from Tarfa to Bahra, is known as Wâdi Fâtma, and contains the most fertile oases of the Tihâma. Its many springs yield a

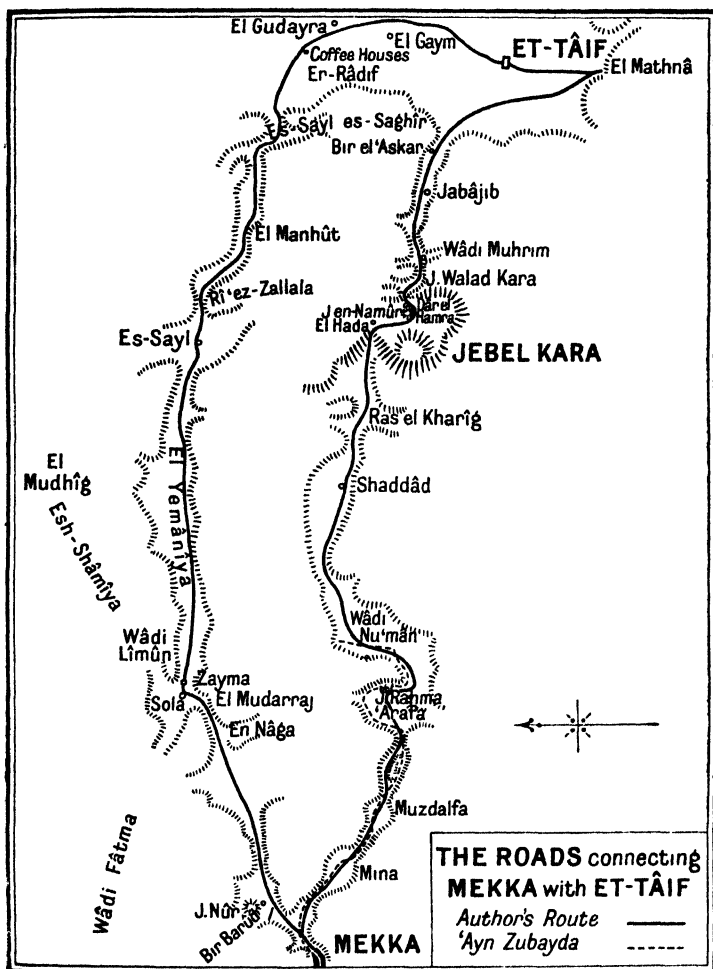
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perennial supply of water. The eastern road from Mekka to El Medîna follows the Shâmîya for a considerable distance, from Sola northward.

The Wâdi El Yemânîya rises at Es-Sayl, towards Jabel Kara, and passing down by way of El Buhayta and Insûma to Zayma and Sola, it there bifurcates—one branch joining the Shâmîya. The other branch bears sharply to the westward, passes through the ravine of El Mudarraġ, and, encircling Mekka at a distance of some fifteen miles to the northward, it joins the Wâdi Fâtma near Bîr el Ghanam.

It was dark at the time of my arrival at Sola, and I was therefore unable to determine, by personal observation, whether the Yemânîya actually joins the Shâmîya at that point, or whether the narrow ravine of El Mudarraġ, westward, represents the sole route of its onward course. The enormous size of the Wâdi from Sola southward, however, led me to believe that when it is in flood, the main volume of its waters must flow straight into the Wâdi Esh-Shâmîya (or Wâdi Lîmûn) at Sola, the united stream thus passing down to Bahra under the name of Wâdi Fâtma. In this opinion I was confirmed by my companions.

As we descended into the basin and approached the village of Sola, I saw several irregular lines of half-ruined stone hovels standing deserted, with gaping doorways, among the weeds and rank scrub. A blur of tall date palms, with withered fronds, stood behind, over to eastward. About us lay stones and boulders, and between these were old half-obliterated scars of low banks and irrigation conduits. I calculated in the darkness that the wâdi might be a mile wide, and on either hand the hills rose up dimly. Signs of former cultivation continued until we reached Zayma,



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a mile further. Here we encamped on a grassy slope, under a great rock, while the first glimmer of dawn began to appear in the eastern sky.

Zayma and Sola, together with the villages in Wâdi Lîmûn, formerly constituted one great oasis. Here were grown dates and bananas; millet, wheat, and barley; limes, oranges, melons and blackberries, together with half a dozen varieties of vegetables. A spring of water, welling from the rocks at Zayma, flowed down a narrow channel in the valley to Sola. This spring was dry at the time of my visit, however, and for two years it had yielded no water. The oasis of Zayma and Sola had fallen into decay, and was deserted. Only the Wâdi Lîmûn, which has an independent water-supply, remained in cultivation. Its fields are watered by a spring called 'Ayn Bardân.

At the confluence of the wâdis is the site of ancient Okâz, where the pre-Islamic Arabs were wont to meet for the purpose of holding an annual fair. Here the great Arabian bards, Amr-ul Kays, Antara bin Shaddâd, El Hârith ibn Halliza, Tarafa bin El Abd, Zuhayr ibn Salma, Labîd ibn Rabîa, and El Aashâ, recited their epic poems, which, Ibn Khaldûn tells us, were subsequently written in letters of gold, and hung in the Kaaba at Mekka, where the Arabs, carried away by the eloquence of the lines, bowed down to them in worship.

At Mekka I had left the filling of our water-skin to Ali, and now, when our thoughts turned to rest and refreshment, I found that he had hung the skin to his saddle empty. Formerly it was unnecessary for a traveller to carry water from Mekka when marching to Sola, for at the latter place there was water in abundance. For two years past, however, there had been no water here. Probably, soon after his birth, Ali

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had absorbed, among other lore, the fact that there was abundance of water at Zayma. His habits, therefore, when travelling on this road, had been formed accordingly. Two years ago the water had failed, but having lived for fifty years in the other tradition, Ali was incapable of filling his water-skin at Mekka when leaving for Zayma. Consequently we thirsted and starved.

The nearest water was three or four miles behind us in Wâdi Lîmûn. For himself Ali would rather have died of thirst than mount and ride that distance, and so would I at that moment. As we lay on the slope I pondered how I might prick his conscience. Presently I began to deliver a little discourse, which gained in warmth as I proceeded. As my guide (*rafîk*) in his country, was it not upon him to see that I neither starved nor died of thirst? Was it not upon him to produce water at my demand—aye, and to slay a sheep too, and procure vegetables from the peasants? Was he not known to every husbandman from Mekka to Et-Tâif?—"Aye, and to El Medîna, even unto Er-Riâdh and the Kasîm," interjected Ali.—By Allah! we had heard it said in Damascus and in Egypt that our brethren in the Island of the Arabs, and especially the 'Atayba, were wont to entertain lavishly those who came among them.—That little reference to the 'Atayba brought intelligence into his eye.—Was the report more than the truth? and must I now die, like a thirsty dog in the desert?

At this, the face of my companion assumed an expression of grave and stern decorum. Forthwith he arose, and drawing his old hair-cloth mantle about him, he turned and paced purposefully away. Tallâl and Kharîs lay among their camels in the hollow of

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the valley, several hundred yards away. Thither proceeded Ali, at whose approach the grinning youths turned to bandy repartee; but I saw that their jesting was ill received, and soon they were both on their feet. Tallâl presently took our water-skin, and mounting bareback on one of the animals he went trotting carefully down the stony wâdi by the way we had come. Kharîs moved over to the far side of the watercourse, and began to gather sticks of brushwood. Ali seated himself to watch the remaining five camels.

Seeing matters proceeding thus satisfactorily, I stretched myself in the shadow of the rock and fell asleep. Presently I was aroused by the sound of somebody moving near me. Opening my eyes stealthily, I saw a small Bedouin boy fumbling at our bag of provisions. I continued to lie still, and feigned to be asleep. The youngster abstracted a wooden slab of bread from the bag, and having inspected it with an interest which was quite touching, he broke off a small piece which he allowed to drop to the ground. Having done this, he carefully replaced the loaf in the bag, and looked around him to make sure that he was not observed. Then, quickly picking up the fallen morsel, he popped it into his mouth and, not daring yet to indulge in the joy of chewing it, walked unconcernedly away.

The poor urchin wore nothing but a few little pieces of dirty rag strung on a cord about his waist, and round his neck a similar cord with even scantier rags depending from it. In fact, so meagre was his dress that that part of the body which is hidden even by primitive savages was in his case uncovered. He may have been twelve or thirteen years of age, but his wiry brown body exhibited a hunger-bitten leanness.

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"O boy!" I called. "Come!"

He turned about like lightning, and faced me—a graceful bronze figure, in the early sunlight. The expression in his dark eyes and on his beautiful features was one of polite enquiry. One thin brown hand had gone to cover his nakedness, and in the manner of that gesture there was great dignity. He approached me a few paces.

"Welcome, O my son!" I said. "Who art thou?"

"I am of the Hudhayl—of Mas'ûd, and my name is Sâlim," said he, and his tone gave to the simple words a vaunt and a challenge.

"Come! I will give you to eat; but do not steal, lest perchance I beat you," I said.

A smile of devilment lit up his little face.

"Ha! Canst thou beat me?" cried he. "Art thou able?"

As I made to rise, he fled like a gazelle down the slope, and turned again, laughing, at the bottom. I called to him by name, inviting him to eat, but he would not come within reach of my hand. Finally I placed a piece of bread on a stone at a little distance, and then retired to my former position. Slowly he approached, like some shy graceful bird of prey. At a movement from me, he fled again, distrusting me and my invitations and laughter. Having advanced and retreated several times, he finally pounced upon the bread and carried it off to eat at a safe distance. As soon as he had finished his meal, he walked, skipped, and ran across the wâdi towards a mangy camel which was evidently grazing in his charge.

The Hudhayl is a tribe whose members, with their kinsmen the Thabata, are renowned as thieves and plunderers of caravans. They inhabit the trackless

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mountain country which overlooks both sides of the Wâdi El Yemânîya, and by taking a position among the rocks which overhang the watercourse in its upper reaches, a mere handful of them can easily hold up a caravan of any size, or even a considerable armed force. This is one of the only two caravan roads which lead down from the central Arabian plateau to that part of the coastal plain on which lies the city of Mekka. The other road passes by way of the sayl-bed of the Northern Wâdi (Esh-Shâmîya). A third route leads down the steep face of Jebel Kara; but this way is impracticable for camels, save to the extent which I shall indicate when I come to describe it.

Presently Tallâl returned with a full water-skin, and calling to Kharîs to bring the firewood, Ali and I soon prepared tea.

Very pleasant was the prospect in this wide herb-decked valley. From the distant brow of the plateau a cold wind blew down the great wâdi; and the sun, no longer a baneful oppressor, was now become a dispenser of kindly comfort. Our banqueting-hall was the mile-wide primeval valley, our couch a grassy bank. Southward wound the grey watercourse, climbing to the uplands. Northward, a carpet of dull greens and browns shot with yellow and grey streaks lay spread in the valley bottom—the tangled desolation of a dead oasis. All about us swelled and rose the mountain buttresses, worn to the smooth rock where they dropped to the wâdi-bed, their further slopes covered now with a new bloom of green grass and scrub. This open world into which we had ridden in a single night, was informed with a freshness of new life. For, though the ancient oasis lay dead at our feet, above it the massive ramparts of rock rose triumphantly into the sky, their

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brows chaplet-crowned by the hand of spring. We were in a new country, and sweet was the cool breeze which blew down the valley lying open before us to the uplands. Far behind us in the stifling plain, shut in by the mountains, lay Mekka.

"O Effendi!" cried Kharîs, as we sat to eat. "What is your thought about the Yemânîya? How like you this country?"

"Wallah, yâ akhi! this place pleases me greatly," I replied, "but let us have less of the 'effendi.' There are no effendis in the wilderness."

They expanded at that. The effendi is a subject of some civilised government, a Turk or an Egyptian, who if he be incapable of standing alone in a dispute, like an Arab on his merits as a man, will invoke the aid of his consul.

"Wallah, true!" said my companions. "In the desert there are no effendis."

Said Ali: "We are companions of the way, brothers; and this one is an Arabi, like yourselves."

Looking at the cordiality in their eyes, I almost wished for the moment that it were so.

Not for long could these youths remain serious. Said Kharîs to me in an audible tone: "This one," indicating his companion, Tallâl, "is unhappy. His woman taunts him because of his impotence. Hast thou not with thee a medicine to help him, O my uncle Ahmad?"

"Silence! O devil!" cried Tallâl, aiming a blow with his stick. "I will slay thee! O . . ."

"Look!" laughed Kharîs, delightedly. "Look at the Effendi examining his face!" For I had turned to see whether the expression of Tallâl's face would confirm the truth of his companion's remark. In the next mo-

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ment the jesting had become a wrestling bout, and for five minutes the Bedouins rolled and squirmed on the ground.

This Kharîs was a merry youth. From the moment of our leaving Mekka until our arrival at Et-Tâif he scarcely ever ceased joking with his companion, save when he slept. There was no self-conscious emulation in his wit: he laughed and jested like a child. His was that spontaneous humour which may be seen among the simple poor all the world over: and what would their lives be without it!

At mid-afternoon we moved off, and pursued our way up the wâdi—usually among rocks and stones, but occasionally over coarse sand. The width of the watercourse was nearly half a mile for the most part, until, as we neared its southern end, it narrowed to a width varying between 500 yards and 300 yards. Several peaks of the bordering mountains under which we passed rose to a height of more than 2,000 feet above the torrent-bed.

At sunset a large flock of white-fleeced and robust little sheep passed, driven by three Arabs on foot, one of whom led a camel laden with food and water-skins and other gear. They came from the neighbourhood of Bîsha, and were driving down to Mekka, where the sheep would be sold during the Hajj, to be sacrificed at Mina by the pilgrims. The drivers enquired of us concerning the prices then ruling in the Holy City, and my companion Ali, being himself a dealer in live-stock, was able to inform them. He advised them to remain where they were for another month or two, for the sake of the grazing, as there was every prospect of the price improving as the Pilgrimage became more imminent. This advice was not so disinterested as it seemed

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at the time, for I afterwards gathered from Ali that he and some of his cronies intended to travel up this road before the Pilgrimage, in order to purchase stock which was being driven down to Mekka. By intercepting the drovers before they reached the market-town, where competition would become a more important factor, Ali expected to be able to purchase cheaply.

At one point in the wâdi we passed by a dyke, built out into the torrent-bed and converging to the left bank. This directed some of the waters of the stream, when in flood, into a narrow ravine, through which it flowed to a patch of cultivated ground beyond.

Not far from this was an enormous boulder, lying in the wâdi-bed at the foot of the cliff. Its weight may have been several hundreds of tons. This, said my companions, is the Nomad's Tomb. Upon a day a Bedouin who had stolen treasure from the Great Mosque in Mekka rode by this way, fleeing from the City. As he went under the cliff at this point, the great boulder fell upon him from above, crushing him and his delul beneath it. He remains entombed there to this day. Until recently, said they, the bleached pastern and fetlock bones of a camel's fore-foot projected from beneath the mighty stone. A string of camels passed us, going down to Mekka. One of the animals was laden with skins of melted butter, and its owner enquired urgently of us concerning the price of samn in the Holy City.

As we advanced further, the banks on either hand became less precipitous, until at sunset we climbed out of the watercourse and found ourselves on a small sandy plain surrounded by low hills. The wâdi stretched across this from the south-west, in the form of a wide shallow bed, floored with pebbles. It rises in

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the hills to southward. Coarse grass and scrub clothed the plain.

At this point, which is known as Es-Sayl, lies the junction of three great caravan routes—those from Mekka, Et-Tâif, and Nejd. On the southern bank of the wâdi stood a few old ruinous stone huts, and towards these we made our way.

My Bedouin companions called to one Muhammad; and presently a Bedouin youth, clad in old ragged garments, issued from one of the huts. This Muhammad lived here with his girl wife, and supported himself by selling tea, sugar, coffee, and other simple articles to the caravaners.

Having unloaded our baggage, we passed into one of the huts. The floor within was littered with a sort of hay of camel grass, and on this Ali and I flung our blankets. Presently the boy Muhammad brought in a small iron pan full of burning faggots. Kharîs had carried with him a great iron tray or brazier on legs, which he had purchased in Mekka. This he now brought into the hut, and emptying Muhammad's fire into it, he piled on more sticks and blew upon the burning wood. Soon we had tongues of flame leaping up to the old thatched roof. The hut quickly filled with smoke, and breathing became tentative. At last I was obliged to lower my head nearly to the floor to avoid being suffocated. However, the fight for air, added to the heat of the fire, quickly made us warm, while outside the hut the temperature was somewhere in the region of zero. The Arabs breathed the smoke-laden air without apparent discomfort; and this struck me as remarkable, for the deserts in which they live are washed by the purest air on earth. My companions appeared like dusky sprites in the cave of a magician, sitting or

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standing in the red light of the blaze. Frequently one or other of them would hold a foot or hand in the flames, and keep it there for several seconds before withdrawing it; or one would lift up the skirt of his smock to warm his bare thighs, unmindful of his nakedness—for the desert men wear no trousers. One of them ran outside to strew down fodder to the camels, and, running in again, leaped up to the fire as though he would jump into it. Soon they were warm, and flinging off their old and worn hair-cloth mantles, they fell to grinding a few coffee berries. Muhammad brought in more fuel, and also four coffee finjâns for our use. Kharîs produced a small linen bag of coarse flour, and mixed some of this with a little water, and then kneaded the dough and divided it into small cakes of bread. These they toasted in the glowing fire, and gobbled them up hot, first handing pieces to Ali and me. The poor stuff was charred on the outside, and scarcely warm at the centre. This was all their food for the journey. They had no other, save their meagre hot coffee-water. Soon the latter was ready, and finjâns half filled with it were handed first to Ali and me as being their guests. This is the hospitality of the poor generous nomads. It is the generosity of the needy. To honour and succour the guest is the first law in their ethical code, and faithfully they obey it. No matter how many guests there be at the feast, say they, there is always room for one more.

Having refreshed ourselves with the Bedouin's hospitable poor bounty, Ali and I opened our provision sack. The smoke in the hut had now become too dense even for the comfort of my companions, and I told them to remove the piece of hair-cloth which hung in the doorway, to allow some fresh air to enter. We then

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borrowed an iron pot, a foot deep and fifteen inches wide, from Muhammad. With the aid of this we soon had a mess of rice and lentils boiling merrily. Kharîs attended to the stoking arrangements; Tallâl stirred the contents of the pot; Ali searched among our victuals for a few onions, which having found he threw into the pot; while I scoured our tin dish. Presently, having passed the test of Ali's palate, the scalding mess was poured into the dish: samn was added, and each man dug in his unwashed claw. I was at a disadvantage, as I found the porridge far too hot to hold comfortably, still less to swallow. However, by commencing operations well to my right, near the imaginary boundary of my neighbour Tallâl's domain, I was able to call some slight attention to my presence. I made a chasm between Tallâl's territory and my own, which he was too polite to ignore. I felt fairly confident that my domain would not be violated on the left flank, as my neighbour on that side was Ali, the amount of whose salary for a week or two to come depended on my goodwill. Such are the artifices to which Arab cooking and table-manners will bring a hungry man; for, although the Arabs will frequently place tit-bits from the feast before one who eats with them, they give no quarter in the general scramble to clean the dish. In the towns it is not so, save among the poorest classes; but the desert is the home of ceaseless ravenous hunger.

As soon as I had eaten my last fistful, Kharîs ran his forefinger all round the dish to secure any traces of food that remained. We then proceeded to brew tea. Ali began to roll cigarettes; and, Muhammad having reported a complete absence of Wahhâbî at the station, all of us were soon smoking in sinful happiness. Looking around me at the dusky faces of my com-

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panions shining in the firelight, I realised something of their simple pleasure. I thought, "Whatever ease the future may hold for me, I shall never experience a greater sense of comfort than at this moment."

Presently a dim shadow stole silently into the doorway. It was an old black slave, bent and grey with age. Ali found him a piece of our Mekkan bread—gone hard as wood in the dry atmosphere. Then, sitting down to munch this meagre supper, he told us, with many an exclamation of praise to God, that his master had been among those massacred by the Wahhâbîs at Et-Tâif. He himself was left destitute and homeless, as nobody cared to claim so old and useless a possession. Now he would go down on his feet to Mekka, trusting to the beneficence of Allah to protect him in the lonely way, and provide for him in His City at the end of the journey.

The fire burning low, we closed the doorway of the hut and, wrapping ourselves in our mantles and blankets, we were soon fast asleep in the hay.

XXI

ET-TÂIF

BEFORE sunrise, we arose and prepared to remove. The atmosphere was bitterly cold, especially by contrast with the stagnant heat of Mekka, but in it there was an upland buoyancy. Having broken our fast, we mounted and rode towards the pass which winds through the mountains to the plateau on which stands Et-Tâif. A party of Eastern Bedouins, encamped on the plain, were in the act of putting on the ihrâm as we passed them; for Es-Sayl is one of the stations at which travellers going down to Mekka are obliged to assume the pilgrim dress.

The pass which we now entered lay in a narrow ravine, and the track presented an uneven surface of smooth and slippery rocks. It is known as Rî' Ez-Zallala. Further on, we came to rocks on either side of the way, upon which rough inscriptions in the Kûfic character had been scored. Here, at a distance of eight or ten yards to the right-hand (western) side of the way, stood a massive granite boulder, upon the smooth hitherward face of which a great, more than natural-sized, human figure in a squatting posture had been roughly engraved. On either side of it were lines of writing, in some ancient character with which I was not acquainted. Between the camel-track and the boulder, the ground rose sharply and was covered with small rocks, among which sprung thorny brambles and coarse camel grass, forming a thicket two or three feet

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high. From the path, therefore, the graven rock was seen at a height, as it were a picture hung upon a wall. Also, the engraving is extremely shallow, and is scarcely discernible at a distance. For these two reasons I should not have observed it had not my companions pointed out to the stranger this mystical mark of the ancients. In the sun countries one looks upward but briefly and seldom, and in those half-blinded glances only the most striking landmarks are clearly seen. The carving is in the Rî 'Ez-Zallala, nearly at the top of the pass. I dismounted and forced my way through the thicket to examine it.

Passing by, we descended a rock-strewn way into a tortuous winding sayl-bed, hill-walled closely on either hand. We came, then, to a narrow ascending causeway, El Manhût. This is a paved way, perhaps four yards in width, which extends for a distance of some two miles. It is constructed low on the side of a chain of hills above the ravine, and is walled on the side which overlooks the precipice. The pavement in places consists of a series of shallow steps. Gaining the summit of this pass, we shambled down the southern declivity into a ravine, Et-Talh. Soon again we left this, and climbed up a low ridge into a maze of shale hills whose strata lay for the most part in a vertical position. Anon we descended into a sandy watercourse of considerable breadth, Es-Sayl es-Saghîr, along whose edges grew shrubs and grasses. After following its course for some distance we rode up the rocky bank and continued southward through a burnt-up country of arid rocks.

We now came onto a high plateau, and in front of us, to southward, stretched a wide undulating expanse of bright yellow sand. To westward lay a low chain of rocky hills; and on the plain before us, isolated heaps

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and pinnacles of great rocks emerged from the sand. One such heap was four or five hundred feet in height, and was composed of enormous boulders of granite, smooth-sided and rounded like gigantic pebbles. On its summit stood a great square mass, surmounted by a thin upright pinnacle, as it were a church and steeple; and gazing upon it from a distance of several miles, I made ready in my mind to observe closely that old ruined castle and watch-tower of the ancients, when we should pass by it. But an hour afterwards, as we came crawling over the hot sand under the foot of that great stone-heap, I found that the castle and the watch-tower were nothing but cyclopean masses of unhewn granite, set up in that seemingly unnatural formation by no hand of man. It is called, said Kharîs, Er-Râdif. Here and there on the sand lay massive boulders of sandstone of a yellow ochre colour; and on one such I saw a lizard, two feet in length from nose to tail-tip, and in colour a bright Prussian blue. It lay on the yellow rock like some great barbaric jewel, rendering glittering homage to the sun.

It chanced that the atmosphere on this upland plain was perfectly still, and now the sun beat down upon us with peculiar venom. The variations of temperature on the Tâif plateau are very extreme, and the natives of the place say that there the sun is more dangerous to health than it is in Mekka. They are careful to keep their heads adequately covered.

In the midst of the plain we came to the Coffee Houses. These are some ten or twelve ruined stone huts, which, many years ago, were coffee-khans in which travellers between Et-Tâif and Mekka might procure refreshments. These inns were plundered during the first Wahhâbî invasion of the Hijâz, and

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have remained deserted for more than a hundred years. Continuing on our way, we presently passed the village of El Gudayra, which lay among a growth of trees in the distance, to eastward.

Presently we took to a track which lay sunk between low banks. To westward appeared the hovels and straggling palm-trees of the village El Gaym; while several half-ruined houses of some size, enclosed within outlying walls, were dotted about the landscape. These farmhouses appeared to be deserted, and few remains of cultivation or husbandry were to be seen in the yards and fields which surrounded them. Isolated figures of men, camels, and asses, moved hither and thither in the wide prospect; and the sound of dogs barking came faintly through the air from several points. Presently the white façades of two or three tall houses came into view on our right front. These were houses of Et-Tâif.

We now turned into a broad road which led, in a direction somewhat to the west of south, to the gate called Bâb Shûbra, or Bâb Es-Sayl, in the northern wall of the city. To our left stood a tall and splendid palace, four storeys in height and crowned by an ornamental roof-parapet. It was of a glaring whiteness, being covered with smooth white plaster; and the central windows of each wing were protected by handsome casements of ornamental woodwork. The garden about this palace was enclosed by a fine wall of pillars, and beyond this, and stretching nearly to the walls of Et-Tâif, a mile away, lay orchards and cultivated fields. This building is the property of a former Sharîf of Mekka, one Ali Pasha, who has resided in Egypt since his deposition by the Turkish Sultan in 1908.

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Proceeding along the straight road to the city gate, we passed by the mud walls of another orchard to our right. Beyond this, to westward, rose the walls of a large and lofty stone shed, the roof of which had collapsed and fallen to the ground. This was once the hangar which housed the aeroplanes belonging to King Husayn. Beyond the hangar, to the south-west, lay the district of Najma, consisting of several ruined houses. The largest of these ruins was to have been the new summer palace of the Sharîf 'Aun Er-Rafîk (Amîr of Mekka, 1299-1323 A.H.), but he died before its completion. Now the great skeleton walls stand silently under the sun, while nought but the lizard and the crow, and the hard slow-creeping shadows, ever moves in those half-built halls. Behind this new ruin lay a patch of desert soil, with a wall built about it and a well dug. Within that wall, as without, the soil was of a leprous dryness and aridity; but signs of past labour of husbandmen were seen in the half-obliterated plough-grooves, and the skeletons of trees undergoing their slow doom of petrification or decay. Immediately without the Sayl Gate stood a large building known as Abdulla Pasha's house. This was now occupied by the Wahnâbî governor of the town.

We passed in unhindered through the open gateway, above which were chambers for the guard, their walls slitted for musketry. Bearing to the right we picked our way between the crumbling ruins of several large houses, and couched our camels before the door of an old house whose doorway was already sunk a foot deep by the rising of the ground-level outside. The western sky was orange with the sunset light as the owner of the house welcomed us in. Abdul Latîf, for such was our host's name, conducted us to a room on the ground

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floor. The earthen floor of this apartment was covered with lengths of thick hair-cloth, for the weaving of which the people of Et-Tâif are famous. The mud walls had been whitewashed at some remote period, but were now mellowed by age and lamp-black.

Abdul Latîf and my companion Ali were cronies of former days.

"Welcome! How is thy state, O Ali? How thy state, O Effendi?" enquired our host repeatedly, bustling about the room. "We will carry in thy baggage, and then would you like to drink tea? . . . Welcome! . . . Came you by way of the Yemânîya? . . . Ha! the Yemânîya! Sit here at your ease! . . . Welcome! . . . How is thy state?"

The baggage was brought in, and then we pushed, pulled, and persuaded Kharîs and Tallâl into the apartment with us, for they displayed a loutish shyness at the idea of entering between walls, protesting their desire to ride at once to the camping-place of their tribe in the Wâdi El Agîg. But they had been such good companions that I could not let them go without a stirrup-cup to warm their vitals against the cold of the approaching night. More than that, I wanted the rascals' company and their jokes for another evening, and to be led by them in the scramble for our evening rice. Such boon companions I have never seen before, nor since. All the way from Mekka they had laughed and joked together, appealing to Ali and me in support of their sallies. No great wit was theirs—only a natural, almost childish, prattle; and though their words were often gross of meaning, they seemed entirely lacking in the townsman's coarseness. They spoke with tongues of the desert, and their bearing displayed

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an attractive grace and carelessness which nothing diminished.

So we sat down to our meal, as we had done on the preceding night in the little smoky stone hut at the Sayl. Having eaten our rice, we sat on drinking tea and smoking—first making sure that the door and shutters were fast closed against Wahhâbite intrusion. The two Bedouins jested together as usual, and laughed to see “Shaykh Ahmad” looking at their impish faces to learn the effect of their words on each other. Occasionally I would ask them a question concerning the country we had passed through, and they answered like children eager to outdo one another.

I thanked heaven that with these careless jesters I had no need to sustain the religious character of a pilgrim, especially as ablutions would have had to be performed in water which was nearly at freezing point, and the old-fashioned Muslims disapprove of the use of a towel after ceremonial washing. Nobody had mentioned prayer since we left Mekka, and I had not performed that rite since leaving Zayma. Now, closing our door and shutters, we sat at our tea-bibbing and smoking, while the muaddins outside chanted the adân for the ‘eshâ prayer.

“Dost not pray, Uncle Ali?” asked Kharîs in mocking tones.

“I pray—naturally!” replied Ali.

“Rise then, and pray!” cried Tallâl, “and fear Allah, my boy!”

“I will pray, if it please Allah,” said Ali, without making any attempt to rise.

“Up then, and pray!” cried the Bedouins again.

“In a moment,” said Ali, and added: “I am not in a state of cleanness, brothers!”

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"Ha!" cried the ribald youths, shrieking with laughter. "Hast known a woman? Where is she?"

"Silence, O youngsters!" commanded Ali, in some alarm. "Before we removed from Mekka, I companied with my woman, and it is known to you that we left Mekka of a sudden! . . . Not so? . . . And at Zayma is no water found! So how could I bathe? It was not possible! . . . Therefore, I cannot pray!"

"We will wash thee, O my uncle!" cries Kharîs, making to rise. "Come, O Tallâl! Catch hold of thine uncle!"

"Enough, O boys!" I cried. "Uncle Ali suffers from the rheumatism, and because of that he dare not bathe. Not so, Uncle Ali?"

"Ay, wallah!" affirmed Ali, without a wink, filling again the finjâns with tea. "Cold water kills me, O Gathering! and Allah does not impose an obligation upon His slaves, save that which is easy."

At last we grew sleepy, and the Bedouins rose to depart. I had paid the full hire of our animals to their owners in Mekka, but these poor youths had no direct share in it. I therefore pressed upon Tallâl a mejîdi to divide between them. He refused to accept it; but we bundled him out of the door with the coin in his hand, and his companion with him. They gave us their hands in salutation and then mounted. Ali and I returned to our room, and wrapping ourselves in our cloaks and blankets slept till morning.

At sunrise my companion and I despatched our frugal meal of dry bread and hot milk, and then put on our mantles and left the town, on foot, by the south-western gate, called Bâb Er-Rî'. My intention was to visit a Sharîf of the house of Ghâlib, named Abdulla, whom I had met in Mekka, and his cousins Tâjeddîn

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and Surûr, all of whom were then living in a house in the beautiful district of orchards known as El Mathnâ, which lies at a distance of some four miles due south of the city. Passing out of the gate we found ourselves on rocky broken ground of an almost chalky whiteness, quite devoid of vegetation. Before us on the plain, a mile to southward, stood a number of well-built stone houses, some of which were large and even handsome. This was the village, or suburb, known as Es-Salâma, in which are the summer residences of a number of wealthy Mekkans. One of the best of these houses belongs to the Shaybi, Custodian of the Key of the Kaaba. A rough track, made by the constant passing of camels and donkeys, led through this suburb to southward. A mile to north-westward of the gate Bâber-Rî', at which I stood surveying the scene, lay another suburb known as Garwa. This lay close without the walls of the Turkish barracks, and here the officers of the Othmânli garrison formerly resided.

Beyond Es-Salâma, in a direction slightly east of south, a large green field of young grain was visible; and behind this stretched a dark mass of orchard trees under the barren foot of the encircling mountains. That was El Mathnâ. Beginning with the wheat-field, at a distance of two or three miles from the town walls, it extends for a couple of miles to the foot of the mountains, and at one point it is a mile and a half in width.

We left the city gate and proceeded along the narrow track. After passing Es-Salâma we came upon loose coarse sand, but abreast of the wheat-field we were again on firm ground. Further along were low mud walls enclosing orchards of fruit trees, grape vines, and rose bushes. Being actually among the

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orchards, I now realised what I could not, up till then, trust my unaccustomed eyes to believe. All the peach trees and almond trees bore a soft load of massed pink blossom. How wonderful to find such beauty of spring in the burning sterile land of Arabia! I said to my companion that what the people of Mekka say of Et-Tâif is indeed true, that it is a garden of the gardens of Damascus, transported hither by the hands of angels. Under the budding and blossoming trees we went, and all about us the air was singing with new life, and the trilling of starlings and the cooing of doves. Rich green birsîm was growing under the trees, through which little streams of water trickled and rippled—flowing out of the main channel of a spring which issued from among the black and burnt-sienna rocks of the overhanging mountain. I did not know whether to regret not delaying my visit until the trees were in full leaf, or to be thankful that it was February with the peach trees in blossom. Within those orchard walls no trace of barren soil was to be seen. All was obscured from wall to wall, by young green herbage. Out of these green lakes rose lines of dark tree-trunks which, spreading into a horizontal framework of branches at the height of a man, held up their masses of blossoms to the sun. Further along were fields of rose bushes. These supply the perfume sellers of Mekka with petals for the distillation of the “atr-el ward,” which is sold at a high price to pilgrims. We passed by fig trees, pomegranate, quince, apricot trees, and grape vines. The latter produce magnificent grapes of a golden yellow colour, sweet and luscious. These grapes are as large and fine as any of those produced in Syria. If they have a fault, it is that they are somewhat too sweet. Among the orchards were

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several stone-built houses, most of which were partially ruined.

Proceeding along a narrow walled lane between two orchards, we presently came to a two-storeyed house the porch of which was built over the roadway. This we entered, and an old black slave rose from a bench in the gloom, and returned our salutation. He then ushered us into a small room furnished with carpets and cushions. Low windows extended along one side, and throwing back the shutters the slave discovered to us a beautiful view of the green garden beyond. Soon my friend, the Sharîf Abdulla, made his appearance, and having greeted us cordially, he ordered coffee to be brought. Learning that I was lodged in a public inn at Et-Tâif, he would not hear of my remaining there, but said he would have accommodation prepared for me in a small house at the upper end of the Mathnâ, where I might remain until my return to Mekka. Shortly afterwards we left, promising to return with our baggage before sunset. It was near midday as we returned across the white plain to the city, and I found again that venomous quality in the heat of the sun. This was the more disconcerting because we had been shivering in an icy wind until an hour after sunrise.

Soon after our arrival at our last night's lodging-place, Abdul Latîf, the inn-keeper, brought in a large dish piled high with Turkish pilau. Ali told me that this attention was because he had informed Abdul Latîf of our acquaintance with the Sharîfs. He hinted that our host took me to be a kinsman of theirs, but I strongly suspected that he had himself deliberately told Abdul Latîf that such was the case. The descendants of Muhammad, whether of exalted or of lowly station, are highly respected throughout the Islamic

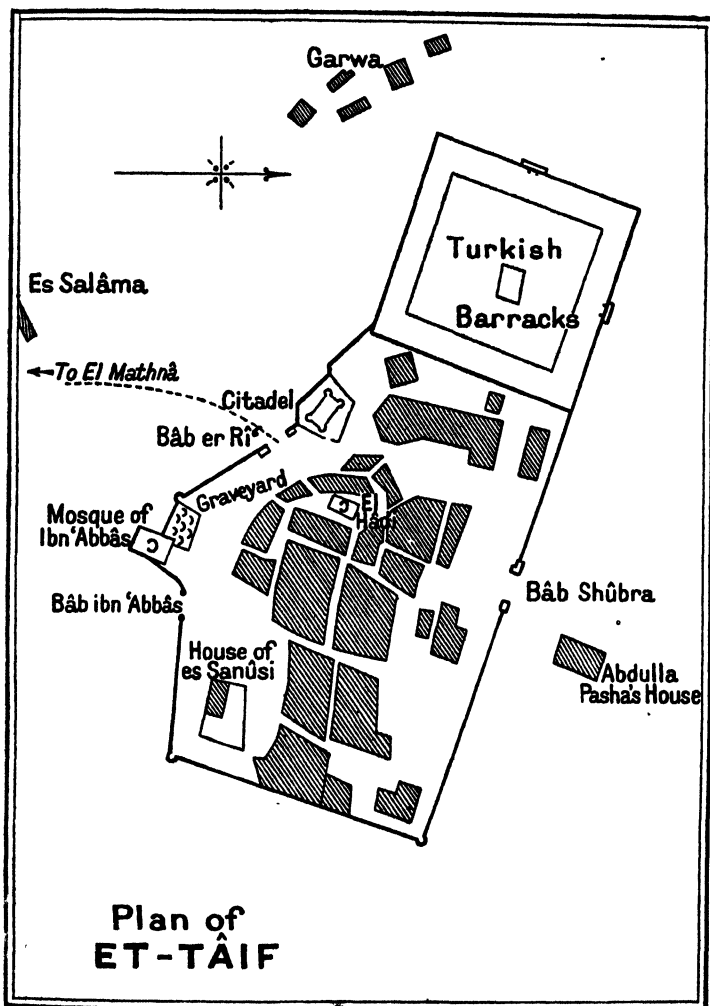
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world. This is the only aristocracy that the democratic society of Islam knows. A sultan may, without loss of dignity, rise or show other marks of respect in the presence of a sharîf. Even this prestige, however, is contrary to the spirit of Islam, in which piety alone can confer eminence.

The Muhammadans make a distinction between the sharîf and the sayyid, which they account for in the following manner:—The fourth khalîfa, Ali, had two sons, El Hasan and El Husayn, by the Prophet's daughter, Fâtma. Both of these youths are named "sharîf" (noble), but the first-named, El Hasan, is considered to merit precedence over his brother by reason of the fact that after the death of their father, he was proclaimed khalîfa by the people of Kûfa. The descendants of El Hasan are therefore accorded the title of "sharîf" (pl. shurafâ or ashraf), while the descendants of El Husayn are given that of "sayyid" (pl. sâda) which means "chief."

The pilau was excellent: a hill of rice surmounted by a boiled chicken, together with raisins and pieces of onion; the whole sprinkled with a condiment composed of spices and peppers. After this banquet—at which Abdul Latîf joined us, asking pardon of God for indulging in the pleasure of listening to our compliments—we stretched ourselves on the hair-cloth carpets and smoked and drank tea. Later, we went out to explore the city.

Et-Tâif is enclosed within a wall of an oblong form, built of stones and mud. This wall was built recently by order of King Husayn. It is inadequate to its purpose, being very thin, constructed largely of mud, and for the greater part of its length devoid even of loopholes for musketry. The only bastions are those at the



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gates and at the four corners. Such a structure would have been extremely useful for the purpose of inclosing a farmyard, or similar property, held on short lease. Its two long sides face, roughly, north and south. Close against its western side there is a large barrack square surrounded by a strong wall of stone, and containing quarters for troops. This barrack was built by the Turks, and is now in bad repair and is untenanted.

The gates in the town wall are three in number: Bâb es-Sayl, Bâb Ibn 'Abbâs, and Bâb er-Rî'. The last two are in the northern wall, and between them lies the Mosque of Ibn 'Abbâs. The latter is a handsome structure, built in the form of an open court, surrounded on all sides by cloisters. Two domes which formerly surmounted the tomb-chambers of Abdulla bin 'Abbâs and one of the Prophet's infant children, had been demolished by the Wahhâbîs. A window, or iron-barred aperture in the wall of the mosque, looked into the vault, and many stains and smudges of a dark-brown colour disfigured the white walls of that corner of the sacred building. For to this hallowed spot a number of 'ulemâ and students of religion had retreated when the Wahhâbîs sacked the town. A mosque containing tombs was scarcely a sanctuary to be respected by Wahhâbîs, even the most tolerant. The wild horde surged into the gateway of the mosque, and crying "God is Greatest," killed all whom they found in the building. The final refuge of the peaceful students and their professors was this corner by the window, and here they were massacred without mercy by their co-religionists, in the Name of the God Whom they and their murderers were supposed to serve. The dull brown stains remain, an eloquent writing on the wall.

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Some four hundred people—men, women, and children—are said to have been massacred when the Wahhâbîs entered the town. The Sharîf Ali, eldest son of King Husayn, had appealed to the civil population to assist in the defence; and then leaving them to their own resources he had fled, accompanied by a disorderly rabble of troops, to Mekka, without the unfortunate householders being at first aware of his departure. Left thus in the lurch, those of the inhabitants who remained in the town flung open the northern gate to the Wahhâbîs upon the promise of a general amnesty. This appears to have taken place after the Nejders had already made a breach in the wall of the barracks. Having entered, the Bedouins fell to looting the bazaar and private houses; but it is alleged that before this the owners of the premises had met them with armed resistance. One survivor assured me, however, that the robbers were not fired upon until they broke into private houses; each individual householder then attempted to defend himself and his women with any weapon he had at hand. Whatever the facts may be, it is certain that no quarter was given to anybody the invaders could lay hands on, regardless of age or sex. Men and women found in the houses were spared until they had revealed to the spoilers the places where their treasures were hidden. Then they were flung upon the floor, and their throats were cut like cattle. This done, the corpses were stripped of their clothing, mutilated, and thrown into the street. A few escaped by dressing in Bedouin clothes and winding white turban-cloths about their heads. These mixed with the horde and pretended to belong to them. One of these, who was an eye-witness of the butchery, said: "The Wahhâbîs slew them, wallah!

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like sheep. And if one shrieked for fear of death, the 'brother,' while he sawed at his victim's throat, cried, 'Ha! dost thou squeal? And I am sending thee to Paradise! Of a truth, thou art no Muslim. Then die, thou unbeliever!' "

Some four thousand people, by barricading their doors, managed to keep the raiders at bay all that night (6th Safar, 1341). On the following morning the Wahhâbî leaders, among whom was Khâlid ibn Luway, a sharîf, who had previously joined Ibn Sa'ûd as the result of a quarrel between himself and King Husayn, entered Et-Tâif; and as the mob had by that time spent some of its fury, they were able to take command of the situation. The surviving inhabitants were ordered to leave their houses and surrender themselves to the invaders. Men and women were then stripped of jewellery and other valuables, and the whole number were imprisoned in the Shûbra Palace (or Ali Pasha's House), a mile to the northward of the town. After being kept there for some days they were released, but not being allowed to return to Et-Tâif they went to Mekka or Jidda. The deserted town was then closed by the Wahhâbîs, and so it remained for two months. The Nejd bands stayed encamped upon the plain round about until the order came from Ibn Sa'ûd in Er-Riâdh to advance on Mekka.

I entered several of the deserted houses, and was struck by the fact that in most of them a hole had been knocked in the wall, usually in a lower room, near the ground. This, said my guide, was done in order to unearth secreted valuables; for in this country, where banking is regarded as being akin to usury, a man keeps his money hidden in a hole in the ground or in the wall.

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Et-Tâif was now almost devoid of inhabitants. The open spaces, and the narrow alleys which lost themselves among dilapidated houses, were strewn with rags, stones, and pieces of mud-brick, mixed with the dirty sand which formed the surface of the ground. Shutters and doors hung crazily open, or were entirely missing, and on the crumbling steps within the houses lay a sordid strewage of rags and rubble.

Et-Tâif has always been half deserted in the winter months, as it is principally a summer resort of the Mekkans, who return to the capital before the advent of the rains. Now, however, it was like a city of the dead. In the market-place, where half a dozen shops still remained open, a few ragged figures slouched in the dust, or sat to drink coffee and groan in their misery. A Wahnâbî passes scowling down the dusty street, and the tongues of the sitters are silent, but terrible are the curses that gleam in their eyes. A few poor things of food were displayed for sale in the shops: a few mantles and gowns and pairs of sandals. Every morning there appears a man who infuses a gleam of life into the stagnation: it is he who sells hot, newly baked bread. Another is the seller of milk. It is painful to see how carefully the purchaser fingers the poor coin in his gaunt hand, and how slowly he hands it over. The original inhabitants are of the tribe of Thagîf.

At el 'asr we went to the Mosque of El Hâdi, and prayed among a score of these ragged half Bedouin people of the ruined town. How they breathed out the Name of God in that wretched place! This remnant of the populace seemed to have abandoned all hope of earthly ease, but like true Semites they never forgot that everything is from Allah. It may be that

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summer coming round once more and a profitable Hajj completed, the Mekkans grown stout-hearted, will ascend again in gay caravans, and bustle and prosperity will return to Et-Tâif.

After prayers, Ali pointed out to me the idol-stone of El-Lât, which was worshipped by the Arabs before the revelation of Islâm. It lies near the town wall, without the gate of Ibn 'Abbâs, and is a mere shapeless mass of granite. Within the walls at that corner (the south-eastern) stands a meeting-house of the Sanûsi dervishes. A second idol, El 'Uzza, which was formerly to be seen near the fort, or citadel, had been smashed up and removed by the Wahhâbîs. The fort is a very strongly-built structure, but it is now somewhat dilapidated. It is situated on a rising ground within the walls, at the right-hand or western side of the gate Er-Rî'. Here Midhat Pasha, the Turkish nationalist, was imprisoned until his death, by order of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd. The large low windows of the tower-chambers in which he was confined lend to the place a light and airy freshness unusual in prison cells. The fort is said to have been built by the Sharîf Ghâlib.

A Turkish bath in the eastern quarter of the town was in ruins. Gaily coloured tiles were falling from the walls, and the luxuriant oasis painted on the ceiling was fast becoming a desert.

Returning to our inn, we loaded our baggage on a donkey which had been procured by Ali, and passed out of the town on our way to El Mathnâ. Ali was acquainted with the situation of our new quarters, and accordingly, he led the way among the orchards. We passed through these until we came to a wâdi-bed, along either side of which, at the foot of the enclosing mountains, ran a narrow strip of cultivated ground.

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These gardens were protected by thick stone walls, forming artificial embankments to the water-course; and behind them, at intervals, rose the houses of the landowners. Several stone steps led up to a door in the wall near to each house.

Our destination proved to be the last orchard on the right-hand side of the wâdi. The door was opened in response to our knocking, and Abdulla, accompanied by his cousins, Surûr and Tâjeddîn, greeted us from the threshold. I entered the garden, and seated myself beneath a peach tree with the three sharifs; while Ali placed our baggage in a little house which was built on the wall at the upper end of the orchard, overlooking the water-course. Having drunk coffee, brought by the wife of one of the peasants, we crossed the orchard and mounted a flight of steps to the house. The latter consisted of three rooms, the windows of two of which overlooked the wâdi, while from the third the garden was visible. This house became my quarters for nearly a week—until my departure from Et-Tâif. The rooms were furnished with cushions, and for pictures we had the open casements, framing vistas of pink-blossoming trees against a background of black and brown hill-side and blue sky. Looking about for something to read, I found on the window-sill a book on jurisprudence by the Hanafi faqîh, Ibn ‘Abidîn. Within the pages of the old leather-bound volume were the portraits of two English actresses, cut from some illustrated newspaper.

At night, when we had eaten, and our hosts had returned to their own house, Ali and I would sit and smoke. My companion was of an understanding and liberal disposition, and he had served a comprehensive apprenticeship to life. As a young man he had left his

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tribe, the 'Atayba, and had settled in Mekka as a dealer in camels and other live-stock. He had subsequently taken service with one Sa'îd Bey, a sharîf, whom he had accompanied to Constantinople. The manner of his making that journey was somewhat dramatic. It occurred many years ago, when 'Aun er-Rafik was Amîr of Mekka. One night a slave brought a message to Ali's quarters in the Abtah, summoning him from the arms of his wife to the presence of his master. When he reached the house under Es-Safa, in which Sa'îd Bey lived, he found the latter sitting in the mag'od smoking his shîsha. Greetings were exchanged, and Ali was invited to sit close to his master, in the raised window-place. Coffee having been served by a slave, they drank in silence. Presently the Bey enquired as to the price of camels. Ali informed him of the state of the market. Then Sa'îd Bey said, casually, "I flee from sudden death. Wilt thou accompany me?" Some sudden Ismailitish quarrel had blazed up between himself and his lord, the Sharîf of Mekka. "On my eye and head," replied Ali. "Whither?"

"To Egypt. To Stambûl. Our matter is in the Hand of God," replied the other.

An hour later they were on the El Medîna road, mounted on fleet deluls. They rode to El Medîna; for what reason is not clear, only that they wished to avoid Jidda. From the Prophet's city they rode to El Wejh, where they shipped on a dhow with their camels to El Cusayr. Off the latter port the dhow was sunk in a storm, and they were obliged to swim ashore, losing their animals. Having hired other mounts at El Cusayr, they rode to the Nile at Kena, where they boarded the train to Cairo. Eventually Constantinople was reached, and here Ali the 'Ataybi clothed himself

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in an European suit of clothes and a tarbûsh. In the Othmânli capital, he fraternised with a "Greek Christian" who told him he had been a Muhammadan for forty years, but dared not openly profess Islâm for fear of being murdered by his relatives. He prayed and read the Korân in secret.

Come again to Arabia, Ali looked back upon his European excursion as some Arabian Night's tale—an exciting and bewildering experience, not altogether unpleasant, but better not repeated. During the Great War my companion was conscribed into the Hashimite forces,* and fought around El Medîna in the cavalry under the Sharîf Zayd, the youngest son of King Husayn.

Coming to present events, Ali said that when the Wahhâbîs entered Mekka he had encountered a number of his 'Ataybi kinsmen among the Ikhwân. These, in reply to his greetings, responded, "Peace be upon those who follow the Guidance.† Wilt thou come with us to the shaykh, or shall we slay thee here?" Ali preferred the shaykh, and was duly escorted to his presence by the scowling fanatics—lately homicides for the sake of loot; now reformed by Ibn Sa'ûd, and become homicides for the sake of what they imagine to be their religion, but what is in reality nothing more spiritual than the ambition of their able leader.

Ali, upon being catechised by the shaykh, was able to convince him that he was at heart a good Wahhâbî, in spite of having lived for so many years among the Mammonites of Mekka. In witness whereof he expressed

* Ali told me that King Husayn imprisoned a number of Mekkan conscientious objectors—men who would not fight against their co-religionists, the Turks.

† The Korân.

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his intention of donning forthwith, and of wearing henceforth, a white turban-cloth over his head-kerchief in place of the hair-rope agâl. Thus would he proclaim to the world what a true "brother" he was.

This decision was highly commended by the shaykh, and Ali, having made this slight alteration in the fashion of his head-dress, had since enjoyed complete immunity from "brotherly" molestation. The one disadvantage of this arrangement was that he had several times been appealed to for assistance by his Wāhhâbî brethren in the course of their skirmishes with the Mekkans. Perhaps a shopkeeper in the sūk asks more for an article than his Wāhhâbî customer is prepared to pay; or he refuses to barter an article in exchange for some Bedouin treasure, worthless perhaps to a townsman; or a Wāhhâbî sees in a shop a religious book containing matters of "innovation", and at once an argument ensues. Possibly blows are struck. "Come, O brothers!" yell the Wāhhâbîs. "The Hand of God is with the company!" (i.e. Unity is strength); and soon the narrow street is filled with a heaving yelling mob. The shopkeepers hastily put up their shutters and retire to a place of safety; some of them join in the fight, for the Mekkans in their own city are no cowards, and they remember the time when any Wāhhâbî who ventured into Mekka slunk along the street "like a dog," and dared not even resent a Mekkan's blow.

In face of one of these riots, Ali, with his Wāhhâbî head-band, was sure to be claimed by the Nejdîs as a brother. Now, however, his badge has become so dirty and rope-like with use, that it would seem sufficiently ambiguous to excuse him from allegiance.

Ali was of a mild and liberal humour, and all fanaticism and suspicion was far from him. He seemed

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to have absorbed some of that aristocratic magnanimity of the ashraf, whom he frequently attended in the capacity of rafîg, or travelling companion, on desert journeys. He chose in all things the happy mean, so far as it lay within his power. Cheerful and peaceable, he left argument and quarrelling to others who frequently knew less than he did about the subject in hand. At night, however, he insisted on closing up our shutters, so that the room became filled with the smoke of our fire and of our cigarettes. He had a terrible fear of the devils which prowl in the dark, and these uncomfortable means were directed to keep them at bay. As soon as he slept, which he did the moment our conversation flagged, I would rise and open our shutters.

XXII

ET-TÂIF TO MEKKA

HAVING walked among the orchards of El Mathnâ, and about the town of Et-Tâif for some days; having feasted on pilau and bread and honey; and having enjoyed the experience of sleeping wrapped in three blankets, lent me by the sharîfs, I decided to return to Mekka. This time I would travel down the perpendicular face of Jebel Kara. Camels are unable to negotiate that steep descent, and mules or donkeys must therefore be employed. No mules remained in the deserted town of Et-Tâif, and I was consequently obliged to hire donkeys. The donkeys used on this route are small rat-like creatures—quite different from the fine Hasa and Egyptian donkeys of Mekka itself.

On the morning of our departure we rose before sunrise. A certain owner of donkeys, Sâlim by name, had promised by the life of his beard to bring three of those animals to the orchard before the rising of the sun. Presently the sun rose, and it became evident that Sâlim had forsworn himself on the life of his beard. Our breakfast was despatched, our baggage ready, and the sun was climbing higher and higher, and still our animals had not arrived. At last, some two hours after sunrise, Sâlim came sauntering up the wâdi, driving before him four saddled donkeys, one of which was laden with two petrol-tins full of samn. The whole party wore an air of complete unconcern. Sâlim smiled amiably as he came up to the orchard door. I returned

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his greeting without enthusiasm, and asked him why he was late. He replied, "The cold was too intense for you, so I delayed until the sun mounted somewhat." I opened my mouth to speak, and was on the point of cursing Sâlim's father, when he himself began loudly to curse the father of one of his donkeys. Upon that it struck me what a scene of discord the world would become if everybody were to curse somebody else's father. I laughed; seeing which Sâlim laughed too, and his donkeys began contentedly to eat a species of barbed wire growing in the side of the wâdi.

"Shall I load the baggage, O my sir?" asked Sâlim.

"Do!" I replied cordially. "That is, when you have smelt the air and inspected the view."

"Up, O thieves!" cried he, striking his donkeys on the buttocks in smart succession with his stick; and driving them up to the steps, he began to assist Ali in arranging the baggage.

Eventually we moved off, marching on foot down the valley. I felt extreme compunction about riding on so small and thin an animal as was my donkey, and Ali of the camel-riding Bedouins had similar thoughts. But when you have a journey of fifty miles before you, through country as devoid of refreshment as a stone-quarry, with a sun like a blast-furnace, you will not long scruple over any aid to progress.

We passed northward, through Es-Salâma and Garwa, leaving Et-Tâïf on our right; and then, reduced to mounting our donkeys, we turned north-westward and entered among the low hills which border the plain on that side. Two Mekkans, mounted on donkeys, here joined us. They were accompanied by their donkey-driver.

We now came into a maze of red and yellow sand-

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stone hills through which we threaded our way for an hour, when we reached Bir el 'Askar—a well of sweet water surrounded by a few acacia trees. Several small parties of travellers—some mounted on donkeys, others on foot—passed by us at intervals, going in the direction of Et-Tâif. The day was Friday, and these peasants would pray the congregational prayer in the mosque of the town. The regular five daily prayers may be repeated on any clean spot of ground, whether in a town or in the wilderness. It is not essential to say them in a mosque, only it is more meritorious for a man to perform them in company with others than alone. The Friday prayer, however, may be held only in a town or village—a place of buildings—and the congregation must number at least forty persons. For this reason there is no Friday prayer among the Bedouins, unless they enter a town for the purpose of performing that rite. Thus did the Prophet seek to bring townsmen and Bedouins together that a better understanding might spring up between them. Nevertheless, townsmen and Bedouins continue to despise each other to the present day.

An hour after passing Bir el 'Askar we reached Jabâjib—a few poor fields of grain, watered from wells, lying in a hollow place like a great amphitheatre among the mountains. Having breasted the rise at the farther side of this basin, we commenced to descend a long declivity, at the bottom of which lay Wâdi Muhrim. We reached the latter place at about midday, and dismounted to rest and refresh ourselves.

Wâdi Muhrim is a cleft in the mountains, and the road by which we were travelling crossed it at right-angles. To ride down the rocky mountain-track from above into the bottom of this depression, is to step out

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of desolation into tropical luxuriance. For in the narrow cleft of Wâdi Muhrim are green fields of grain and vegetables, interspersed with thick orchards of fruit trees. These gardens are watered by means of wells which yield a copious and constant supply of water. On the hillside, close above the orchards, stood the village of Muhrim, and isolated stone huts were scattered along the valley.

Wâdi Muhrim is the ihrâm station of this road, and accordingly it now became necessary for us to assume that uncomfortable dress. Ali and the donkey-drivers, being of Bedouin-kind in whom laxity in religious observances goes unremarked, chose to enter the sacred limits of the Haram wearing their ordinary clothes. The two Mekkans and myself, however, proceeded to make ourselves physically uncomfortable but morally content by bathing and assuming the ihrâm "for the 'Omra."* About his waist one of the Mekkans—a merchant—fastened a small leathern bag, which probably contained a considerable sum of money in gold. Having completed this change of attire we mounted again and rode forward up the opposite hillside.

Our way now lay up a narrow and rocky ravine, and the track was encumbered with rocks and boulders. As we advanced, the way became ever steeper until, coming to a pool of green and stagnant water, we dismounted and climbed on foot to the summit of the mountain. From the pool the track mounted upwards in a zig-zag form, turning now to left and then to right in a series of acute-angled bends. So broken was the mountain with projecting rocks that, looking up its nearly perpendicular side, one could see no sign of the

* The ihrâm is always put on with the "intention" of performing either the Hajj or the 'Omra.

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track from below. This mountain is composed of red sandstone, and it is known as Walad Kara.

Among the boulders of Walad Kara, and in the trench-like bends of the track in which we were ascending, the Sharîf Ali and his followers had taken up their position after fleeing before the Wahnâbîs from Et-Tâif. Those of them who rode mules or donkeys drove their animals up with them, and all prepared to make a stand. On the approach of the Wahnâbîs, however, the Hashimites again took to flight, and this time they did not stop until they reached Mekka. The Nejders were unable to advance beyond this point, as no camel can climb the mountain-side. They ultimately reached Mekka by the route of the Wâdi el Yemânîya.

We were occupied for more than an hour in ascending Walad Kara. I had purposely kept in the rear and allowed the two Mekkans to precede me, so that I might surreptitiously cover my head from the blinding sunfire. Ali and the donkey-drivers were fully clothed, and in any case such easy-going rascals take little account of religious observances. The two Mekkans were of a different temper. One of these was a merchant and the other was a schoolmaster, and both were punctilious as to prayers and other matters of ritual. Unfortunately, I had omitted to bring an umbrella with me when leaving Mekka, and now, dressed only in my two towels and my sandals, I was like to have my brains boiled away to nothing by the time I reached the summit of the mountain. I adjusted the upper garment of the ihrâm so that it covered my head and shoulders completely; and continued plodding on my way upward. If the Mekkans should have anything to say concerning my back-sliding I would tell them

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that I intended to sacrifice a sheep as an alms in Mekka, and all would be well. But if I went unobserved so much the better. Presently, however, the school-master drew his own *ihrâm* over his head. He, too, valued his brains more than the chance of martyrdom. The good merchant allowed the sun to have its way with his shaven pate to the end. We climbed up the mountain as flies might crawl up the side of a house straining at last safely over the edge to the top.

Now, indeed, we were come to upland places. Turning at the summit, we looked back over the crests of the intervening mountains, and saw Et-Tâif in the far distance, lying in the midst of the plain. Nearer, almost under our feet, though far below, lay the rock-bound oasis of Wâdi Muhrim. A cool wind from the north-west blew about us, and the sun had ceased to burn, but only shone gloriously.

Our way led over the sandy plateau of the mountain-top, which was dotted with detached fields of sparse grain and *birsîm*. All the country about us was of a rich ruddy hue—something between pink and orange and red. Two miles in front of us, to north-eastward of the edge of Walad Kara, rose a beautiful isolated conical peak of red sandstone, perhaps a thousand feet in height. It is called Jebel en-Namûr. At its foot, and on the lowest slopes of its southern side, certain square shapes of the same red stone slowly took form and stood out as we approached. These cubes gave to the lower slope of the hillside a curious terraced appearance, but so perfectly did their colour match that of the hill under which they stood, that at first sight only those whose background was the sky could be distinguished. Those which were backed by the red hillside were quite invisible at the distance of a mile.

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These shapes were the houses of the village of Dâr el Hamrâ.

Arrived at the village, we crossed a little water channel, and passing by a small patch of green fields and gardens—strangely beautiful in the ruddy wilderness—we skirted the western side of the peak and marched onward into the open plain of El Hada.

We were now at an altitude of more than six thousand feet above sea-level, and the wind blew chilly in spite of the strong sunshine. The geological nature of the country changed as we advanced—the red sandstone giving place to grey granite. Large and small boulders of this stone lay strewn over the plain, and the low walls which protected the scattered fields of grain and vegetables among which we were now come, were built of rough pieces of the same stone piled insecurely one upon another. Dispersed widely about the plain was a number of stone huts belonging to the Hudhayl peasants. At different points along the track were several huts of a larger type. These were coffee-houses, in which the many travellers who pass on this road may procure refreshment and shelter. Many of the Mekkans make summer excursions to this place, and remain lodged in the coffee-houses for a week or two at a time. Here they amuse themselves with music and talk.

All about the plain, and particularly on its eastern side, were small orchards of peach, almond, pomegranate, apple, apricot, fig, and sidr trees, and also grape vines. Some half a score of dwellings worthy the name of houses lay among the orchards on the eastern side of the plain. These houses belong to Mekkan families. The most conspicuous among them was a large two-storeyed house belonging to the Shaybi. The

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whole of this district is known as El Hada. It is much colder than Et-Tâif, and is also far more inspiring, for besides the beauty of vegetation it possesses grandeur of aspect. On the north-western edge of the plain a great black peak rises to a height of quite 2,000 feet, and its summit cannot be less than 8,000 feet above sea-level; possibly it is nearer 9,000 feet.

We rode on among the fields and boulders until we came, soon after noon, to a coffee-house with a walled yard at one side of it. This we entered, and having surrendered our donkeys to Sâlim, Ali and I seated ourselves on a raised mud bench, protected by a roof of rude branches which extended along one side of the yard. Having kindled a fire with the assistance of the coffee-house keeper, of whom we borrowed a clay coffee-pot and an iron cauldron, we prepared our midday meal. Water was here in abundance, as there are several springs which rise in the mountains at the edge of the plain and flow down in little rippling streams among the orchards. Sâlim attended to his donkeys and carefully inspected his two petrol-tins of melted butter, and then joined us with hungry looks. The two Mekkans, seeing us preparing food, forbore to open their own provision bags, but seated themselves near us and waited to be bidden to partake of our repast, offering, meanwhile, much valuable advice on the subject of cookery. Prayers were postponed until el'asr, as we intended to avail ourselves of the traveller's privilege of saying two prayers together. Our talk centred upon the capture of Et-Tâif, and my companions enumerated the names of some of the slain—among them being the Câdi of the city and several other religious shaykhs of high repute and station, and also the Shaybi's son, Hasan. That which my com-

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panions seemed to find most bitter was the stealing of the inhabitants' slaves. The merchant spoke of a beautiful Circassian slave-girl who, rather than submit to the brutal and lascivious embraces of her Bedouin captor, had stolen from his tent at night in a madness of horror and thrown herself headlong down a precipice on the slope of Jebel Barad.

At mid-afternoon we mounted and rode forward for half an hour over a grassy plain broken here and there by granite rocks. At a short distance before the edge of the precipice down which we were now to travel, Ali and I dismounted, and Sâlim took charge of our donkeys. There are two ways by which the traveller may descend Jebel Kara. The old route is steep and slippery, and donkeys are unable to carry a rider down it. Only the best mules can safely attempt such a feat. Sâlim would drive his four donkeys down by that way, and the two Mekkans with their donkey-driver would accompany him.

The second route lies to the right hand, or eastward, of this. It was constructed in recent years by the Turks. It was intended for the passage of camels, and droves of these animals, without burdens, have made the ascent. The track is so steep, however, that they cannot descend by it, and are therefore obliged to return to Mekka by way of Et-Tâif and the Wâdi Yemânîya. At the time of which I write, this pass was broken down in several places, and I was informed that no camel had made the ascent for several months. The work of construction appears to have been still uncompleted when the Turkish rule in the Hijâz came to an end (1916). The track describes a series of acute-angled bends connecting straight paths which have been blasted and hewn in the granite of the mountain-

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side horizontally, one below another, from top to bottom. In some parts a parapet has been constructed on the side towards the precipice, while at other points there is no such protection. Parts of the track are so steep that steps have been hewn in the rock to facilitate passage, and in several places the foothold is so precarious as to be dangerous even to a man on foot. By this route I had decided to negotiate the descent.

After parting from Sâlim, we walked forward over the grassy plain towards the crest-edge of Jebel Kara. Beyond it, all was an open void. On either side of the path a growth of small vegetation grew so thickly among the scattered rocks as to conceal the ground completely. Now we were approaching the imminent edge of the lofty plateau. The ground rose gently, as though to accentuate the utter immensity of its impending descent. In another moment I stood wonder-struck on a flat-topped projecting buttress, as it were upon the very prow-point of some great ship at sea, and looked down upon the yellow-scarred petrified ocean of the Tihâma, a thousand fathoms beneath my feet. To westward the mountain-edge fell away in a great curve, and then came forward again five miles away. In the centre of that curve was the beginning of the mule-track which descended in the ravine to the plain; while, somewhat to westward, a torn and broken white ribbon hung from crest to foot of the mountain—caught among the stark rocks which projected from its side. This was a flowing stream of cascades and waterfalls, fed by a spring at the mountain-top. To the right hand, the ground also receded from the projecting point on which I stood; and then, coming forward again, far away to eastward, it stretched a mighty bastion into the northern distance. The tawny side of

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that great mountain-wall was scarred with a hundred black ravines of a terrible grimness. Neither in the Alps nor in the ranked volcanoes of Java had I seen such grim and monstrous majesty as this.

On the dusky plain far below, stretched the winding broken chains of the Tihâma mountains, and beyond these, to westward, lay the open yellow plain. From among the shadows which obscured its farthest edges came an intermittent glitter—the sunlit waters of the Red Sea, eighty miles away.

With a last look at the green edge of the plateau, I turned to make the descent. Ali cast anxious glances at the beetling mountain-side above and about us, as we made our way down the zig-zag track. "These Hudhayl are dogs," he said. "They obstruct the way, and steal the traveller's goods." When I would have stayed on some jutting ledge to look at the wonderful scene, he bade me not to loiter. "They will hit you with lead, Shaykh Ahmad!" said he. "Though you see nothing of them." Frequently he prayed, "O Lord! give me Thy covering!" His mind was doubly uneasy for my sake—his rafîk.

For three hours we walked and ran like goats down and along the tracks cut in the mountain-side. At last we reached the point at which our way joined the mule-path; and here, under a green sidr tree, we found Sâlim and the Mekkans waiting with the donkeys. The mule-path by which they had come runs straight down the ravine, with very little turning aside for easy gradients, and so is very much shorter and considerably steeper than the new road, although the latter is cut in a steeper side of the mountain.

We now crossed over the brook which descended from the mountain-top, and pursued our way among

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the rocks and stones of its left bank. This rippling stream of fresh water was a blessed sight in the stony wilderness. At intervals, small acacia and sidr trees grew along its banks, while at a little distance crooked and lifeless thorn bushes stood like skeletons among the stones. After sunset we stumbled into a dim village of scattered stone hovels—El Kurr.

At El Kurr the ravine is nearly a mile wide; and dotted over the basin, but chiefly among the rocks of its western slopes, are the stone huts of the villagers. These huts are, for the most part, of a single chamber, and they have no doors to their entrances nor any windows. The inhabitants are abjectly poor, and the furniture within one of these dwellings consists of nothing more than an iron pot for cooking food, a clay coffee-pot, a hair-cloth or leather sack, and a heap of rags. A few stony fields of sparse grain lay in the hollow of the basin, and some of the starveling peasants shared their huts with a goat or two and some scraggy chickens.

The coffee-house was also a hut of a single chamber, but it was distinguished from most of the other dwellings by a piece of hair-cloth hung as a curtain in the doorway. Outside this hut we placed our baggage on a space of swept ground. It was now quite dark, and having prayed and eaten, we entered the hut to sleep—taking the remains of our fire with us. But soon the smoke drove me out again from among my snoring bed-fellows, and I tried to make myself comfortable on the ground. For a long time I lay awake, cold and miserable in my ihrâm, under the stars. I had wrapped my hair-cloth mantle and my blanket about me, although it is forbidden to the muhrim to cover himself with anything but his two pieces of seamless material, by day or by night. The rough hair-cloth

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against my bare legs was like a penitent's hair shirt. For a pillow I was using our provision sack. This contained dates, rice, and stale bread. Now I heard padding footsteps about my head, and the snuffling of inquisitive noses. Without moving away I stealthily gathered handfuls of stones from the ground about me, and then rising up suddenly I flung a sustained volley at the mongrel hounds which prowled about my pillow. They did not bark, but one which was struck by a stone gave a frightened yelp, and they ran silently away into the night.

At last I fell asleep, and then . . . I was awake. I thought I had hardly slept for ten minutes, but surely I heard fresh sounds. Yet now fully awake I could hear nothing; nor could I see anything moving.

Again I dozed, and fell asleep. . . . Suddenly, a shriek or cry! . . . I was awake . . . I was asleep . . . I was awake! In the blackness above and behind me, an agonised voice said hoarsely, "Yâ Rasûl . . .!" "O Prophet . . .!" It sounded like the supplication of a dying man. Somebody issued from the inn-keeper's hut, and from the coffee-house itself came the Mekkan schoolmaster, followed by Ali. The latter cried out anxiously: "Ahmad! Nothing has happened to you?" I assured him that all was well with me, and we pressed forward to find out what was the matter. We climbed up some rude steps of piled stones, and as we came out on an upper terrace, a voice in the darkness in front of us said in horror-struck tones: "Verily we belong to God, and unto Him we shall surely return!" The Mekkan merchant who had travelled in our company from Et-Tâif lay dead at the inn-keeper's feet. In the faint starlight I could see that the left side of his neck was black with blood, and a great dark patch was

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visible on the right side of his bare chest. The upper garment of his ihrâm was covered with large dark stains. His leathern money-bag was no longer attached to his waist. As I bent down to feel his pulse to make sure that life was extinct, a loud outcry arose in the darkness behind us. The voice of Sâlim came from the lower terrace, indignantly bewailing fresh misfortune. He had placed his two petrol-tins of samn beside his donkey-saddles, outside the hut, and now they had vanished.

Dawn was breaking over the eastern hillside, and Ali began to kindle our fire. The shaykh of the village, who had been summoned to the coffee-house, regarded the murder with fortitude, not to say indifference. At last, somewhat impressed by our insistence on the punishment which would be meted out to his wretched village by Ibn Sa'ûd if the culprit were not produced, he rose with a portentous air, and accompanied by a score of the villagers, he made a house to house search for the two tins of samn!

The schoolmaster, having for some time debated with ourselves and Sâlim as to the possibility of transporting the merchant's body to Mekka for burial in the Maala, finally decided to bury him where we were, on account of the difficulty of carrying him so far. He was therefore buried as a martyr, in his ihrâm and without ablution, the schoolmaster being of the opinion that this was the correct procedure. As to how the unfortunate man came to meet his death, we supposed that he had gone groping about in the darkness to find a place in which to relieve himself, and had been set upon by thieves.

The sun was some two hours high when we left that ill-fated place. The saddened but garrulous school-

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master would lodge information at Mekka concerning the murder of his companion; and Sâlim would do likewise in respect of his samn. They were careful to enquire where Ali and I might be found in the Holy City, that they might call upon us, if necessary, to give our evidence. I never heard anything more of the matter.

Still descending a gradual incline, we picked our way among the stones of the ravine for over half an hour, when we reached level ground in the sandy valley known as Ras el Kharîg. After riding between high mountain walls for an hour, we came to the village of Shaddâd—a small collection of rush and stone huts on the plain. Several of these huts were open to travellers, while others were occupied by the villagers and their families. All who alight may rest in the huts, and prepare their food. A finjân of coffee is handed to each traveller. The chief man in this poverty-stricken place sells, as though they were things of fabulous value, a poor trash of dry crumbling tobacco, dirty sugar, green coffee berries, and ancient tea dust.

With hearty shouts and greetings our donkey-drivers ride into the open space between the circle of huts. We are now in the oppressive Tihâma, and exhausted humanity constantly craves rest and refreshment. "Es-salâm, 'alaykum, yâ Mahmûd! Kayf anta?" "Peace upon thee, Mahmûd. How art thou? How is thy state? Art thou well?" While Sâlim saluted the keeper of the poor caravanserai, we crawled inside to hide ourselves from the sun. So low are the roofs of these rude tents of dead branches and dry camel grass, that a man is unable to stand upright. "Welcome!" says the coffee-house keeper. "And upon thee be peace and the mercy of God! How is thy state? We will give

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thee coffee. Tightened you from El Kurr? You' descended the mountain yesterday? That is known! Welcome! What news from Et-Tâif? . . .”

Were it not for the profit derived from passing travellers, no one would dwell in these sterile sun-parched valleys. Indeed, but for the Korânic ordinance of the Pilgrimage, the valley of Mekka itself would be uninhabited, and known only to the passing nomad for the water of that strange never-failing well of Zemzem.

Having refreshed ourselves and rested until the hour of el 'asr, we again mounted our donkeys and rode forward. Like ants we crawled across the hot sand. On either side the mountains towered up and imprisoned us without hope of escape, save by toiling along the low earth through tortuous sun-stricken ways. Near behind us, to the south-east, rose the cyclopean wall of Kara, its black crests over-topping the world. At our feet tufts of spiny grass, of an unholy grey-green hue, crouched closely in the sand by the wayside. As we passed, scaly reptiles of lizard form, between one and two feet in length, ran out and scurried across the burning plain. From among the shadows, horned adders of a leprous yellow-greyness slithered wriggling away. A monstrous solitary bird wheeled in vast ceaseless circles in the blinding sunlight far above us. In the mountains on either hand great clefts appeared at intervals, leading away into unknown sterile places. Over this mighty desolation lay a primeval stillness. If one of my companions spoke, no sooner had the words left his lips than the silence closed upon the futile sound so completely that it seemed as though he had never spoken nor would ever speak again. Occasionally a sun-blackened nomad on his gaunt camel

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rode by us at a few yards distance, but his passing made no sound.

We rode into a greater sayl-bed—Wâdi-n Nu'mân—a dry watercourse in the centre of the mile-wide plain of the valley bottom. Further on, we came to a line of strongly-built circular erections, like stone well-para-pets, which extended westward from a point at the right-hand (northern) side of the valley. These marked the course of the subterranean aqueduct of 'Ayn Zubayda, which has its beginning at the foot of the mountain at that point. The source of the water is a spring called 'Ayn Honayn, situated among the mountains at a distance of two hours' journey from the Wâdi Nu'mân. Several smaller springs are also led to this aqueduct, and a copious supply of excellent water is thus carried some twenty miles to Mekka. The work, which represents no small feat of engineering, is named after the Lady Zubayda, wife of the Abbasside Caliph Harûn Er-Rashîd, who defrayed the expense of its construction.

The dwellers in this terrible region are of the tribe of Curaysh—that strange confraternity which numbers among its families the noblest of the Arabs and also the vilest. Among them, said Ali, are the Beni Da'd and the Beni Fahm, "who know not the rites of their religion, and many of them have never seen the Haram of Mekka in all their lives." Relating some of the details of their hard stressful existence, he told me of their gruesome method of circumcision. Among them, said he, this rite is deferred until the subject reaches the age of puberty. Before he reaches that age, the youth's parents have already arranged his marriage contract. On the day appointed, the elders of the two families assemble for the purpose of witnessing the

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performance of the Semitic rite. The youth's affianced bride is also present. He who is to perform the surgery, now commences his ghastly operation: for among these spartan wretches, the skin of the whole belly, from immediately below the navel, is removed, as is also that of the front and inner side of the thighs for half way to the knees, and the whole of the skin of the male organ. While the operation is being performed the youth stands up to his full height, with feet firmly planted, and "with a mighty joy," said Ali, shouts at the top of his voice his own name and the names of his ancestors, brandishing a long dagger which he holds in his hand. His affianced bride sits before him, helping him to fortitude with *zaghrata** and beat of drum. Should the youth quail or whimper in the agony of this barbarous courtship, it is a great disgrace to him, and his lady is entitled to refuse to marry him. Ali said that the greater number of them die of this circumcision. Other tribes in this region whose members practise this rite are the Kabâkab and the Talaha.

At sunset we reached a point at which the Wâdi Nu'mân turned southward. Here there was a ramshackle caravanserai, known as the 'Arafa Coffee-house; and to westward a gap in the mountains disclosed the 'Arafa plain. Riding up to a raised earthen platform beside the stone-built coffee-hut, we unloaded our beasts, performed ablutions, prayed, and prepared our supper—of tea, stale bread, goat-milk cheese, and dates. We sat talking for a brief space after our meal, and then, having prayed the 'eshâ prayer,

* The *zaghrata* cry is produced by moving the tongue quickly from side to side in the mouth, while from the throat a high-pitched squealing cry is emitted. The lips are held as in whistling, and the sound of the *zaghrata* is a shrill and prolonged trilling.

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we lay down on the earthen platform to sleep. "We were six persons last night," said the schoolmaster in a resigned tone of voice, as he rose to enter the hut, "and now we are but five." The ihrâmed man could not sleep uncovered in the cold night air. Pious exclamations were murmured sleepily at his remark. He disappeared within the hut. The tired donkeys quietly munched their dry grass . . . a faint distant cry of a jackal . . .

A noise of tin cans came dimly to my understanding, and the next moment I was wide awake in the early dawn. We rose and broke our fast, and then rode forward into the plain of 'Arafa. I told Ali that I wished to pray two prostrations in every mosque between 'Arafa and Mekka. Accordingly, we turned our animals' heads towards Jebel er-Rahma. The schoolmaster and his donkey-driver left us, and struck across the plain on the direct road to the Holy City. Arrived at the Mount of Mercy, I dismounted from my beast and climbed the hill in order to explore it thoroughly. This accomplished, we rode across the plain, westward, to the Mosque of Nimra, which I found occupied by a flock of goats. We then proceeded through the valley El Mazamayn to Muzdalfa, where we again dismounted to visit the mosque. Marching on to Mina, we found the Mosque of El Khayf closed and locked. It is opened only at the Feast of Sacrifices.

The road between 'Arafa and Mekka is marked by a score of narrow parallel tracks in the stony bottoms of the valleys. These are made by the great concourse of beasts which pass this way every year, carrying their thousands of pilgrims. All this long way, now as silent as the grave, had been teeming with life when I had last seen it. Now on Jebel er-Rahma and the plain of

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'Arafa there was no sign of that mighty concourse of hâjjis from every quarter of the world. Only the little heaps of stones beneath which lie the bones of dead hâjjis, and the bleached and broken skeletons of sacrificed animals, told of the great departed host. Occasionally a string of camels, laden with "crosses" of twisted desert grass, went by us, but that was all. I saw no sign of the apes which, the Mekkans say, infest these grim black mountains.

Riding down the long Mina street, we passed the three stone "devils" and then descended the narrow rocky way into the valley of El Abtah. Before us lay the familiar valley, revealing, with every fresh turn, some old outlying house or mosque or well of the Sacred City's eastern districts. It was nearly noon as we rode down El Gashâshîya towards the Haram, making our way to Abdurrahmân's house. Arrived at last in the narrow lane, I flung myself from my donkey and passed into the cool relief of the dark entrance-hall. I was blistered and blackened by sun and dirt. I had for days past been alternately burnt and chilled, and I was half-starved. I crawled up the dark stairway to my room, where Abdurrahmân met me with the cordiality of an old friend. "Praise to God for your safe return!" said he. "Will you drink coffee or tea? . . . And then we will dine; and you can perform the towâf and the 'running' after sunset, and so free yourself of the ihrâm."

XXIII

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MEKKANS

BY the Mekkans, women are most truly esteemed for their ability to bear children, especially male children, and for their success in rearing their offspring safely to the age of puberty. A barren woman, no matter what other excellent attributes or housewifely accomplishments she may possess, seldom retains her husband's affection for any length of time.

The confinement of Mekkan women is attended by several of her female relatives and friends. Usually one of these possesses the necessary knowledge of such matters, but frequently a professional midwife is engaged. The father, sitting anxiously in his mag'od below, or on the steps outside the harîm quarters, waits, with murmured prayers, to hear the result of the occasion. In the event of the infant being a boy, he controls his delight within the bounds imposed by decorum, and utters praise to God. If the newcomer happens to be a girl, his delight is usually somewhat more easy to control, and his praises may be interspersed with the resigned remark: "It is the will of God."

Before the inception of Islâm, the barbarous custom of burying their female children alive was practised in many of the Arab tribes. Generally speaking, the reason was poverty. Male infants were potential warriors—raiders and plunderers for the benefit of the family or the tribe. Female children, like male children,

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had to be fed and clothed until they reached the age of puberty; but far from then becoming, like their brothers, a material asset to the tribe, they might prove a handicap. Unless the girl could be sufficiently dowered by her father, she might remain unmarried, and be in danger of contracting a dishonourable connection. Presumably these barbarians decided that by burying the unfortunate child alive they were not actually responsible for her death, since she did not yield up the ghost while in their hands. Female infanticide, from long custom, therefore, had lost whatever savour of crime may once have attached to it, until Muhammad forbade it and placed it in its true category. Also, by transferring from the bride to the bridegroom the obligation of providing the dowry, he rendered void the principal reason for female infanticide.

A week after the birth of a child, the Mekkan father invites a number of his and his wife's relatives to the ceremony of naming the infant, usually immediately after sunset. The women visitors are entertained upstairs in the harîm, while the men occupy a lower room. One such entertainment to which I was invited occurred at the house of one Mahmûd the Syrian. His male guests being assembled, Mahmûd ascended to the harîm, where he received the infant from one of the women. The little creature reposed on an elaborately embroidered and bespangled cushion of coloured plush, and was himself arrayed in satin finery, including a gaudy little bonnet. His head rested on a tiny pillow, similar in material and decoration to the cushion. Over all was spread a fine gauze veil, heavily bespangled. Re-entering the reception room, Mahmûd carefully deposited his burden on the floor in the midst

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of his guests. As he did so, we exclaimed, "God's will be done!" and "Blessed be God!" More direct expressions of admiration would not merely be considered rude, but would be positively dangerous, as being likely to attract the malignant attention of the devils to the new-born child.

The father next carefully arranged the cushion in such a way that the infant's head pointed towards the Kibla, its feet being in the opposite direction. This matter having been meticulously attended to, he knelt down and said: "I take refuge in God from Satan, the accursed." Immediately after this he bent over the child's head, and placing his mouth close to its right ear repeated the *adân* three times. The *igâma*, which is very similar to the *adân*, was then repeated three times into the left ear. After this, Mahmûd said in a distinct tone: "I name thee Muhammad Sâlih."

This ceremony formally makes the child a Muslim, and the devils have then no power to pervert it.

As Mahmûd named his child, we at once repeated the name with signs of pleasure, adding "God bless thee." Everybody present then quietly placed a small piece of money beneath the little pillow, and somebody proceeded to knock with an iron pestle upon a brass mortar. The latter act was a signal to the women waiting upstairs, and informed them that the child's name had been pronounced. It was immediately acknowledged from the *harîm* by a chorus of joyful cries, known, in the singular, as *zaghrata* (pl. *zaghârât*).

In the midst of this enthusiastic uproar, Mahmûd gathered up the infant on the cushion, and after those present had kissed it on the cheek, he carried it back to the *harîm*. Thence he and his slave descended after

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a few moments, bearing trays laden with dishes of food. Having eaten, the guests dispersed.

Sometimes the father will ask a shaykh of pious renown to perform the ceremony of naming his son, and on such occasions the shaykh usually opens the proceedings by reciting a long chant, entitled "The Nativity of the Prophet."

On the fortieth day subsequent to its birth, the infant is taken to the Haram and placed for a moment upon the threshold of the Kaaba, while a shaykh makes supplication to God for its future well-being. The Mekkans say that in the case of no male child born in their city, which survives until the fortieth day of its age, is this ceremony ever omitted.

By Islamic law a mother is obliged to give suck to her child for two full years, but this period may be shortened, with the father's consent. Some of the wealthy employ foster-mothers to nurse their babies, and many of the male children of the Ashrâf are handed over to Bedouin foster-mothers among the desert tribes about Et-Tâif. Here they live the hard life of the Bedouins, and grow up possessed of the fearless and independent spirit of the desert men. They also acquire the idiomatic speech and correct pronunciation which are best learnt in the hair-tents of the open wilderness; and besides learning the customs and much of the lore of the desert, they keep alive, by means of foster-kinship, those tribal connections which may be of use to them in after life, when they attain to positions of power or are threatened with that danger to their lives which, in the fickle society of Arabia, may come to any prominent man at any moment.

Mekkan children, up to the age of four years, seldom

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wear any clothes at all when indoors, save in the coldest season of the year. Out of doors, the boys wear smocks, turbans, and sandals, and sometimes a little jacket over the smock. Children of the lower classes play in the lanes, naked, or dressed in nothing but the smock—the shaven heads of the little boys, and the matted hair of the little girls, being unprotected from the sun. Among the upper classes, the children seldom leave their houses until they are old enough to go to school. Until that time they are perpetually with the women, and as the latter almost never go out, the children share the same sedentary existence. Occasionally, on Thursday evenings, parties of women from good harîms may be seen in the Mosque, and at such times they are frequently accompanied by their children—the little girls of five years or more being closely veiled, like their mothers.

At the age of five years, it is usual for a boy to be sent to the Korân school. By that time his father will have taught him to repeat the Confession of Faith, and possibly the Fâtiha also. At the school, he is first taught the letters of the alphabet, and is then gradually advanced until he can read aloud parts of the Korân, without knowing its meaning. Instead of a slate, the pupil has a board of whitened wood, a foot long by nine inches broad, on which he writes in ink by the aid of a reed pen. Having finished his lesson, he cleans the board by means of water and a sponge, or rag.

The Korân schools in Mekka are very numerous, and there are three colleges of a more advanced type. As most of the Mekkans enjoy many months of leisure each year, the lessons given in these schools are usually well attended, as are also the lectures on advanced religious subjects, which are delivered by shaykhs in

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the cloisters of the Great Mosque. Since the time of which I write, Ibn Sa'ûd has established in Mekka a theological college, similar to El Azhar in Cairo, though smaller.

The teaching in these schools is concerned almost exclusively with religious subjects, and in general the lessons are straitly arranged to conform to the puritanical tenets of the Wahhâbîs. All books imported from Egypt and elsewhere are perused by persons appointed by the government, before being surrendered to the booksellers to whom they have been consigned. Many books are said to have been banned.

In religious subjects, and even in some others, such as history and geography, the Mekkans, although scarcely an enlightened community, are better instructed than the Egyptians, with the exception of those who have studied in El Azhar, on the one hand, or in the secondary schools, on the other. The Mekkans dabble in these matters for eight or nine months of the year; but as soon as the pilgrims begin to arrive in considerable numbers, the pursuit of learning is dropped, and everybody, from the highest to the lowest, the oldest to the youngest, attends to business. Some hire out houses, camels, shugdufs or tents; some become shopkeepers and rent the little shops in the markets, which have lain empty for many months; the mutawwifs refresh their memories of the supplications used in the Hajj; dervishes and poor foreign students now become errand boys or water-carriers; little urchins insist on doing necessary or unnecessary services for the helpless hâjjis, and accept their reward with dignity or scurrility according to its amount.

When the hâjjis leave Mekka, then the Mekkans turn their thoughts to pleasure and laziness, each

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among his own coterie. Then they are impatient of the intrusion of foreigners in their midst, unless the foreigner conforms closely to their manners. It is at this season that a stranger who would live as an intimate among them has to fear making himself conspicuous by exhibiting strange manners and ignorance of Muslim customs.

At the age of six or seven years, the boys, having learnt to pray correctly, to recite parts of the Korân, and to answer a simple catechism, are circumcised. In the original Mekkan custom, this is an occasion for some display and merry-making, but under the Wahhâbî regime it is done more quietly. Female circumcision is also practised.

In many of the more purely Arabian families, it is the custom to make incisions in the skin of the faces of male children. These are usually three in number across each cheek-bone, and the resulting scars are some two or three inches in length.

Mekkan children are generally very respectful and submissive to their parents and elders, though some of the little boys of the lower classes are exceedingly rebellious towards their mothers. Well-dressed children whom I did not know have sometimes kissed my hand in the streets. Many men of the mutawwif class make use of the most gross and obscene language, even in the presence of their tiny children, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the latter quickly acquire the habit.

I was frequently visited by the two children of a neighbour; a little girl of four years or so, named Ayesha, and her brother Muhammad, a boy of five. One day I heard excited cries on the stairs outside my door, accompanied by the rapid padding noise of little

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hurrying bare feet. The next moment Ayesha fell over the threshold, with Muhammad on top of her, hitting lustily. I separated the combatants, and Muhammad, catching sight of a packet of Turkish delight which lay on a cushion, ceased to blaspheme. I allowed him to take a piece of the sweetmeat, and then ordered him off the premises. His mouth being full, he went quietly. By that time Ayesha had dried her tears, or rather had distributed their moisture more evenly over her little smudgy face.

"Give the red piece!" she said, coaxingly, pointing to it with her finger and thumb. I handed her a pink piece of the sugar-coated sweetmeat. The little yellow-brown fingers closed around the misty opaque mass, and then she held it up for my inspection—an enormous pink pearl, in a five-pointed golden setting.

"Women," I said, "are oppressed in Mekka."

"Ana mozlûma," said she. "I am oppressed, Hâjj Ahmad."

"You must not fight with Muhammad," I said severely.

"The dog!" she said, her pretty red mouth dropping sugar.

"But," I said, "if Muhammad is a dog, and you are his sister, then you will be what?"

"He is not a dog," said she, mumbling and ignoring my logic. "The dog is better than he. That one is a pig! an (untranslatable)! a son of adultery!"

Five minutes later, still munching delectably, she left me "in the keeping of God."

Among the population of Mekka as a whole, however, foul language is heard far less frequently than it is among the Egyptians.

While still a boy, the Mekkan assumes those traits of

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affability and pride, courage and meanness, prodigality and greed, which are the outstanding features of his character. Before strangers or chance acquaintances he displays a kind and dignified bearing, which, though often merely assumed, is extremely effective. He delights in brilliantly coloured dress, in rich carpets and gaudy hanging lamps for his house, and in as numerous harīm as his means will allow, even though its members be mutually antagonistic.

The number of free-women in Mekka is not actually abundant, and in consequence of this the amount of the dowries paid is rather high. Many Mekkans, whose means are not ample, do not marry until they are twenty-five years of age, or even older. In such cases, however, they do not hesitate to invest the greater part of their capital in the purchase of a female slave. In the event of necessity arising, they may sometimes hire these slaves out as cooks, nurses, or housemaids, to the hâjjis, and themselves receive their wages. Or they will sell them again at need. Where there is no financial impediment, the Mekkans usually marry before the age of twenty.

The mother, or other female relative of a youth, having decided upon a girl whom she considers suitable to be his wife, proceeds, with his consent, to propose the matter to the girl's parents or guardians, either in person or through an agent. This is a matter of some delicacy, and skill is also required in the negotiations concerning the amount of the dowry. This having been agreed upon, a day is appointed for promulgating the marriage contract. On that day a feast is prepared in the house of the bride's parents, to which the bridegroom and his friends are invited. A shaykh is usually present, and he instructs the parties in the correct

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procedure. The number of witnesses required by law is two, but in the event of the bride being a virgin, there is usually a considerable gathering present. All being assembled and seated, the girl's father, or guardian, takes the bridegroom's right hand in his, and says to him: "I give you my daughter (or my ward) Fâtma (or whatever her name may be) in marriage for a dowry of twenty guineas (or as the case may be)." The bridegroom replies, accepting the contract and calling upon those present to bear witness to the fact. This being completed, the parties are husband and wife. Neither the bride nor any other woman is present, and no written contract is executed. It is usual for the parents to ask the girl's consent in private. She does not see the man until the night on which the marriage is consummated, unless she happens to have caught accidental glimpses of him as he passes by in the street, beneath her window. The bridegroom is equally uninformed as to the personal appearance of his bride, for his mother, though almost certainly a woman of imagination, would doubtless not be possessed of sufficient mental balance to describe her faithfully.

Consummation usually takes place about a month after the contract is made. The period varies, however, and in the case of the marriage of children by their parents, consummation naturally takes place years afterwards.

On the arrival of the appointed evening, the husband goes to see his bride at her parent's house. On this occasion he is led into her room by old women, and left alone with her for a few moments. He unveils her face, and hands her a piece of money. I am told that this is usually a very solemn occasion, unless the couple happen to have known each other well in childhood.

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In the latter happy circumstance, the youth usually makes the girl blush, even if he does not make her smile. The time at his disposal, however, is short, and should he delay, the old women who have let him into the room will joyfully exercise their right to turn him out again. On the same night, the bride is escorted by her relatives to her husband's house. This is done very quietly in Mekka, almost in secrecy; but on the following evening the husband gives a great feast at his house to all his relatives by marriage, as well as to his blood relatives. To such festivities, women as well as men are invited; but the former are entertained in the harîm quarters at the top of the house, while the men are accommodated in the mag'od or other rooms on the ground floor. If necessary, the lower rooms of a neighbour's house are borrowed for the accommodation of the surplus guests, or mats and carpets are spread in the street outside. The feast brings the marriage festivities to an end.

The Mekkans have few amusements, and they indulge in no form of out-of-door sport, unless it be an impromptu race or wrestling match on the occasion of an excursion. Singing songs, and playing on the lute, the reed pipe and the drum, either in their houses or in the open-air coffee-houses in the environs of the city, are their chief forms of relaxation. The making of music, however, is discouraged by the Wahhâbis.

The club of the Mekkans is the great quadrangle of the Haram. Here friends meet by accident or appointment, sit and talk of religious or secular matters, read, sleep, perform the towâf in company, have their letters written (those of them who are illiterate) by the public writers who sit near Bâb es-Salâm, or feed the sacred pigeons.

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These pigeons are of a pretty blue-grey colour. There are thousands of them in Mekka, and an endowment fund exists for supplying them with grain. Two little stone troughs, sunk in the ground of the open quadrangle, are constantly kept filled with water for their use. One man holds the office of dispenser of the grain to the pigeons, while another holds that of waterer to them. This gives some idea of the manner in which work is found for the eight hundred servants of the Mosque. It has been asserted by the Mekkans, in all ages, that neither the sacred pigeons, nor any other bird, ever perches on the roof of the Kaaba. Sleeping, every night for some months, on a roof which overlooked that of the Kaaba, I had a good opportunity of testing the truth of this assertion. I have repeatedly searched the roof of the sacred building, and have never once seen there either a bird or any other living thing. At times when the roofs of the makâms of the imâms, and the ground below them, were covered with myriads of pigeons, I have constantly seen the Kaaba's roof bare and silent. The Shaybi, too, informed me that no defilement of birds is ever found there.

A Mekkan, seeing a thoughtless hâjji or slave sitting, or sleeping, with his feet outstretched in the direction of the Kaaba, at once points out to him the sacrilegious nature of his posture. Similarly, a Korân is never allowed to remain on the ground if it is seen there by some more enlightened Mekkan. They uphold the sanctity of their Haram in every way.

To sit and contemplate the Kaaba while pondering upon God is in itself an act of worship, and this act is frequently indulged in by the Mekkans. Old men, sitting under the cloisters, with a beatific expression on their time-worn faces, have said to me some such words

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as these: "When we are young we are ignorant. We leave the land of God and travel abroad. But when we are old we understand the Truth. So now we sit always in Mekka, and if we had not been ignorant in our youth, we would never have left her. . . . Not for an hour." They sit, these old wise men, contemplating the Kaaba with their physical eyes, and visualising Paradise with the mind's eye. Perhaps the material eye, sometimes in those long silent sittings, sees eye to eye with that of the mind. Beyond the cloisters, the Kaaba stands shimmering in the burning sunlight, as they gaze at it. One of these old men had seen the Prophet in a dream, "and his face was like the full moon shining—God bless him and give him peace"; and he had told him not to leave Mekka again. Another, a Kurd of an ascetic and emaciated appearance, told me, as the days went by, that the Kaaba was God—that God was in every man, and in every tree and every stone. He was a sûfi* of an advanced doctrine. I counselled him not to tell the Wahhâbîs so. Thereupon, looking at me with a fatalistic stare, inhuman and passionless, he said that punishment or reward, pain or pleasure, Hell or Paradise, were nothing to him. Not being possessed of his stoicism, I ceased to associate with that man, for fear of the Wahhâbîs; but had we been in the shadow of a more tolerant government, I should have asked him to initiate me in the mysterious tenets of his order.

Other men whom I met, in the quiet shadowed cloisters of this great Islamic Club, were exiles whose

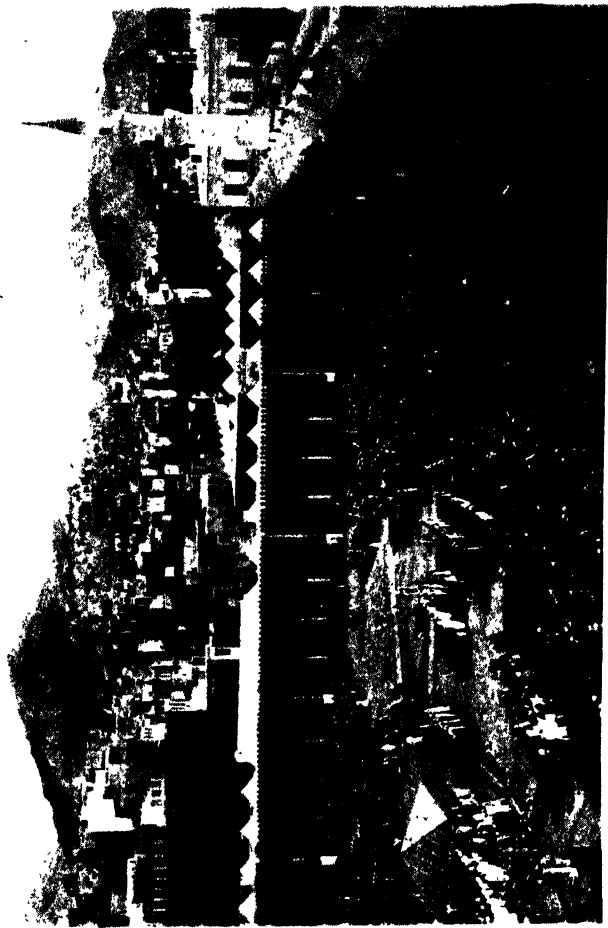
* A sûfi is one who seeks mystical union with God. By concentration of thought, and by living an ascetic life, he seeks to lose consciousness of the material world, and of himself as a material being. The word is derived from sûf (wool), and probably has reference to the material in which some of these ascetics were clothed.

native countries were under foreign rule, and two of them had been sentenced to death, in their absence, by the French Government of Syria.

Within the walls of that Sanctuary, Malays murmured of the riverside villages of Sumatra; Javans talked of the "fire mountains" of their native island; cunning-eyed Indians chattered without ceasing; Turks mused sleepily; hooded Moors spoke sternly together; Mekkan shaykhs sat surrounded by their docile pupils; here sat a party of Mongolian-featured Bokhârans; in the alcoves against the great wall poor Africans ate their frugal meals out of tin cans and gourds. About the eastern gates parties of Wahnâbîs lounged on elbows, or lay sleeping—flung about like a bivouacked squadron, all mixed up with their swords. In and out among the groups, the zemzemis passed with their clay water-vessels, giving the multitude to drink.

Suddenly, into the murmur of voices, comes the sharp sound of hard-wood sticks beating on the stone pavement. It is the Mosque servants waking the sleepers, for the hour of prayer is at hand. They strike their long staves on the ground near anyone who sleeps, shouting the while, "Es-sollâ! Es-sollâ!" (Prayer! Prayer!) Soon all are roused, and those who need fresh ablutions retire to the water-places without the Mosque, in order to perform them.

If it be near sunset, a great crowd now throngs into the Haram—for all attend the sunset prayer, even though they miss many of the others. The declining sun lights up the white or grey façades of the houses which rise in tiers on the hill of Abi Cubays. From the northward and southward, the blue of the sky turns to rich and richer gold. As the sun sets, the first notes of the adân



PILGRIMS FORMED IN CIRCLES ABOUT THE KAABA FOR THE PRAYER OF EL 'ASR
(mid-afternoon)

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are quavered forth by the shaykh of the muaddins, from the roof of the Zemzem building. Instantly, the air is a-ring with long musical cries, swelling in crescendo, fading in diminuendo, which come singing out of the arrow-heads of the Haram's seven spires. As the last long note dies away, one stationed beneath the Makâm el Hanafî rises and chants the igâma. At once all the congregation rise and form in rows—wreathing the Kaaba about with human rings. Everywhere in the congregation there is brilliant colour, contrasting sharply with the Kaaba in its dull black covering. Turbans red, black, yellow, white, green, vermilion, pink, orange, and blue are there—like flowers in some strange garden. As varied in colour are the jubbas and jackets of the Mekkans, but the white thawb preponderates if the season be hot. Behind the Makâm el Hanbalî, the Wahhâbîs display a great patch of dull browns, relieved only by the dirty white of the breasts of their thawbs, and the chequered red and white of their head-dresses. No sound is heard. Into the waiting silence comes the voice of the imâm. Anon, all bow down as one man, with hands on knees. Rising upright again, they drop swiftly to the kneel, and bowing their heads, place their foreheads to the ground, murmuring the response to the imâm's words "Allah Akbar!" Many a time I have delayed my kneeling for a few seconds in order to see that vast many-coloured throng prostrate itself as one man in circles about the Kaaba.

The obligatory prayer being ended, the members of the congregation perform their supererogatory devotions independently, and then sit telling their beads, or talking together in groups.

Many of the Mekkans swear oaths by "the Exalted Kaaba," or by "the Ancient House," but such oaths

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are considered irreligious. The Muslim is enjoined to swear by none other than God. This oath takes three forms:—

1. Wallah! (a combination of “wa” and “Allah”) is used for emphatic assertion, e.g. Wallah! it is as I say!

2. Billah! denotes urgent request, e.g. Billah! give me to drink!

3. Tallah! denotes emphatic disgust. This form is rare in speech. One of the Ashrâf, speaking of the Wauhâbî governor of Et-Tâif, said to me, “Tallah! his speech made me ill.”

In their prime, most of the Mekkans are physically robust and muscular, of medium height and well formed. This community is of so composite a nature, however, that a general rule cannot be accurately stated concerning their physical or their moral attributes. In complexion, they range from coal-black to sallow-white, these two extremes being accounted for by the custom of keeping African and Circassian concubines. The son of a slave woman by a free-man is himself a free-man, and enjoys the same family rights, of inheritance and so forth, as does his half-brother whose mother is a free-woman and the legal wife of his father. A Mekkan who has a fair-skinned wife usually prefers to take as his concubine the blackest slave-woman he can find in the market, provided she be comely as well as black.

In old age many of the Mekkans become gaunt and emaciated; they are seldom fat, though this condition is occasionally seen. In general, they are short-lived rather than the contrary, which is not surprising when the situation and climate of their city are considered. The temperature of Mekka varies between 45° C. in the shade at midsummer, and 20° C. in the cold

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weather, but the true causes of the deadliness of its climate are the lack of all movement in the atmosphere on many of the hottest days and nights, and the dampness which prevails in the rainy season. In the hot season, I have frequently found it difficult to walk a few hundred yards in the early morning, on account of the languidness produced by the stifling atmosphere, though the actual temperature was inconsiderable. Light breezes passing over the mountain-tops have no power to stir the air in the lifeless depths of the Mekkan valley. The rainy season is the most fatal to the Mekkans, and this lasts from the beginning of November to the end of January. A shower fell as early as the 20th of September while I was in Mekka, however, and another as late as the middle of March. Thunderstorms, accompanied by rain, may occur at any time of the year, but are unusual at midsummer. The heaviest and most frequent rainfalls occur in November.

The Mekkans still tell of the great flood which poured into Mekka in 1909, making of the Haram a great lake, the surface of which rose, at one time, higher than the threshold of the Kaaba. They were occupied for several weeks in clearing away the mud which coated everything which the water had reached, including the floor of the Kaaba itself.

When rain falls every householder places large tin dishes, empty petrol tins, or other receptacles, beneath the water-spouts of his roof in order to collect the rain-water. Everybody is delighted at such a time, and the children on the house-tops, as they splash like sparrows in the quickly-forming puddles, sing a little hymn beginning with the words: "O God! O Generous! send of Thy bounty upon Thy servants."

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The Mekkans say that small vermin, such as lice and fleas, cannot exist in their city, as the hot dry climate is fatal to them. My own experience is in accord with this, for during my stay in Mekka I saw no sign of any of these pests, though at the time of my entry into Arabia I was not the sole occupant of my clothing. The Mekkans are a clean community; and their linen, which they change at least once a week and often more frequently, is always washed with soap, very thoroughly, and ironed, by the women. I doubt if even the Mekkan climate can avail to sterilize some of the Egyptian and Indian hâjjis; but the fact remains that the houses of Mekka are, or become when vacated, free from vermin.

On the death of a Mekkan, the women of the house set up a brief wailing. Once or twice by night, as I lay on my roof, I was awakened by this sad piteous crying filling the silent darkness with a heart-broken moaning. In Mekka the wailing is very brief, however, for the Prophet forbade prolonged wailing for the dead. The women friends of the bereaved family at once hasten to the house, whence, having pacified the afflicted women, they soon depart. The same day the body, having been washed, is borne out on a bier for burial. The bier is placed on the pavement of the Matâf, in front of the door of the Kaaba. The brief burial-prayers are then repeated by one of the mourners, all of whom remain standing. It is then lifted again, and borne through the Janâiz gate to the Maala, the mourners relieving each other, in quick succession, of the duty of bearing it. Passers-by will also run to take a turn at this duty, and the bearers are constantly changed without the pace of the procession being slackened. No coffin is used; the dead, wrapped in a

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simple white shroud, being buried in a hollow grave which is undercut in the bottom of one side of a vertical shaft. The shroud is commonly soaked in Zem-zem water and allowed to dry before being used. After the interment, the male friends of the deceased pay a brief visit of condolence to the male members of the family. Simplicity and brevity mark these ceremonies.

Often a *Korân*-reading is held in the house of the deceased on the seventh and fortieth days after his death.

Frequently my companions spoke of the plague, and from them I learnt many gruesome details of the effects of this terrible affliction. In the Pilgrimage of 1326, Yûsef, leaving Mina with twelve pairs of *hâjjis* in shugdufs, had found only six persons of the twenty-four alive when they reached Mekka. All along the road, and in the streets of the city, dead bodies lay strewn in hundreds. Trenches were dug in the graveyards, and the bodies were stacked in them, but so great was the mortality that the dogs fed upon many of the bodies before they could be buried.

Life in Mekka seemed to me, sometimes, attractive; and at other times, horrible. The quietness and simplicity of life in the desert town, and the freedom from inquisition which characterises its inhabitants in their dealings with the stranger, were grateful.* On the other hand, the absorption of all classes in matters of profit and loss, and their lack of precision in discussing any useful matter, not excepting their religion, created an atmosphere of discomfort and hopelessness. The *Ashrâf*, however, many of whom have been educated

* I must add that there would be no freedom from inquisition for anybody who was not thoroughly conversant with Muhammadan religious practice.

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in Constantinople, are generally well endowed with all such knowledge as may be improved by intelligent reading of the Arabic newspapers, and the religious heads of the community deliver their lectures as ably as do the 'ulemâ of Cairo.

Sometimes life in Mekka seemed to take on the strangeness of insanity. Mentally comparing the manners of many of my companions with those of the dwellers in more fortunate countries, I found them repulsive. Sometimes I have felt, when they joked together, that laughter like theirs belonged within the walls of a mad-house, and that the counterpart of their grimacing faces and starting eyes could only be seen through the aperture in the door of a padded cell. Ordinary conversation is often carried on with such violent gesticulation as other races reserve for passionate argument. When discussion develops into quarrelling, their quick yelling voices rise in deafening pandemonium. In a moment more the strife subsides, and they are again grinning together in senseless good humour. Sometimes I have left their company, and gone to a little chandler's shop, where I have casually bought sheets of the ancient English newspapers in which the shop-keepers wrap their customers' purchases. Then, retiring to my room, I have lost consciousness of my surroundings in reading last year's news of England.

One of the most objectionable characteristics of the Mekkan is his vainglory. For so many hundreds of years he has been obliged by his profession, or by the mere fact of being a "neighbour of God," to adopt the attitude of a teacher to the pilgrims, that he has come to consider himself as belonging to a superior race. I have heard a mutawwif tell an ignorant hâjji that his intercession with the Creator on the Day of Judgment

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would be sufficient to ensure the hâjji's entrance into Paradise.

On the other hand they are manly men and very human, and their affability and conversational powers make them pleasant companions at a coffee-party or on the road. At such times they are simple and agreeable. At the mention of a deceased person whom they knew in life, they feelingly and reverently murmur "God's mercy upon him!"

XXIV

WOMEN AND SLAVES

MEKKAN girls are usually given in marriage at the age of thirteen or fourteen years. From the age of five or six until they are married, those of the better classes scarcely ever leave their father's harîms. During this period they learn to perform household duties, and are taught how to pray. Many of them also acquire sufficient knowledge to read aloud—though without proper understanding—the Korân, and certain religious chants known as *gasîdas*. After marriage, a woman never leaves her husband's house save to attend the birth, marriage, or death ceremonies of relatives, unless it be for a rare visit to the Haram. On the occasion of any outing of this sort, the women are accompanied by their female slaves, if they possess slaves, and also by a son, or trusted male slave, of the master of the house. Wealthy people who possess eunuch slaves employ them in the surveillance of their women on such occasions. A husband never walks with his wife, even though their destination be the same. So jealously are women secluded from the stranger's gaze, that even the decrepit water-carrier inserts the mouth of his water-skin into a hole in the wall outside the door of the harîm apartments, and pours the water through, whence it runs down a stone channel into the tank in the kitchen. In the case of many of the poorer families, however, most of these precautions are of necessity relaxed, as the wife has many additional duties

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to perform, and may even be obliged frequently to leave her house for the purpose of shopping.

A woman's indoor dress consists of a pair of narrow cotton trousers, reaching to the ankles, and a cotton shirt; while about her head is bound a coloured kerchief, from beneath which her hair hangs down in two long plaits. In the cold weather, and in the hot weather also if she be entertaining company, she wears, over the above-mentioned garments, a gaily-coloured cotton frock which extends to some six inches below the knees. Whenever she leaves her house, she dons a frock of this sort, and also a heavy black or blue-black cloak. The latter is simply a length of very heavy crepe, or similar cloth, nearly as large as a bed-sheet. It is so arranged as to cover the head and forehead, the hands, and the whole of the figure as far as the ankles. A long white veil of starched calico conceals her face up to the eyes. This is held in place by two tapes which, passing above the ears, are tied at the back of the head. Her feet are clad in stockings, and ankle-boots of soft yellow leather, and are then thrust into heel-less slippers. Arrayed in this attire, the Mekkan lady successfully presents that appearance the object of which is that she may not in the least degree disturb the minds of male strangers with unworthy desire.

The women of Mekka are considerably fairer in complexion than are the men. This is, doubtless, a result of the secluded life which they live. During my sojourn in Mekka I saw, by accident or design on their part or mine, a number of women at unveiled moments. Abdurrahmân's wife, and his sister, a young widow, both of whom I frequently encountered on the stairs, made very little attempt to hide their faces after I had been a month or two in the house. I always made a

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point of repeating the words "Yâ Allah!" or "Yâ Sâtir!" in a loud voice when ascending the stairs, but frequently they failed to hear me. They would usually enquire as to my state with demure smiles, unless Abdurrahmân happened to be at hand.

Abdurrahmân's house being one of the tallest in our quarter, the windows of my apartment overlooked several house-tops on the opposite side of the way. Women and girls, in indoor undress, frequently made their appearance on these roofs, and my custom was to hasten, with averted eyes, to close the shutters whenever this unseemly spectacle was presented to me. When rain fell, however, a spirit of devilment arose on those roofs. At such times, women and children would swarm gaily up, and laugh and clap their hands, and sing a chant of thanksgiving, as they ran about in the rain. The little boys and girls would throw off their clothes and expose themselves to the cool falling rain-drops. Finding something attractive in this simple gaiety, I sometimes neglected to shut out the sight of my neighbours, but sat on a cushion before the open casement in order to enjoy the sight of the rain-drops which were falling between them and me.

Walking once in the outskirts of the city, I came upon the unusual sight of three ladies accompanied only by some children. Their veils were thrown up over their heads, leaving their faces exposed, and they appeared to be taking the air. The lane was quite deserted save for ourselves, and they made no attempt to adjust their veils as I approached. Instead, they stood motionless, in an attitude of expectancy. They doubtless divined easily enough that I was not a Mekkan. Their challenge was so obvious that I saluted them gravely with "peace be upon you." One of them at once turned

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about, blushing, but the other two chorused "and upon *you* be peace and the mercy of God." The accent on the word "you" was very pronounced, so I gave them a little verse of poetry from Hafni Bey Nâsif's book of grammar. At that they all laughed and turned away. They were probably about twenty years of age, and two of them were slim and beautiful. Their dark eyes were large and lovely, and their complexions of a light golden brown.

Women pilgrims frequently wear their national costumes, except during the actual days of the Pilgrimage, but in Mekka they all wear veils, whatever the custom may be in their own countries. Some of them frequently remove their veils, however, and I have seen them sitting bare-faced in the Haram, particularly Malay women. The Mekkans excuse such lax conduct with the remark that those who are guilty of it are ignorant foreigners, and that such is "their custom." The Wahnâbîs, however, mutter curses on the offenders.

Beside household duties, which include washing and ironing all the linen of the family, the women of a Mekkan household occupy their time in gossiping together, in sleeping, in reading the Korân, and in reciting long religious chants of which the most popular is "The Nativity of the Prophet." Most of them are inordinately addicted to the smoking of tobacco through the medium of the shîsha. Many of them are more or less accomplished players on the lute and the drum, and in this amusement they take great delight, although it is not considered to be highly respectable.

Sabri was very susceptible to the charms of music, and on one occasion he told of an experience of his in

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this connection. He said that, when a youth of seventeen, he used to hear the two daughters of his father's neighbour, Abdul Hâdi, singing and playing on the lute so skilfully that he felt he must see them with his eye.

"Every night they sang and hit the lute like afrîts," said he. "How shall I tell you! Was this hitting the lute, or the work of the jinn? At last my mind said to me: 'You must see the daughters of Abdul Hâdi, O Sabri!'"

"The next night," continued he, "I saw Hamîd, the father of the blue jacket . . ."

"I know him," interjected Yûsef, "the son of Abdul Hâdi."

"Always wore a blue jacket," said Sabri, with a nod. "God show him mercy." Here he quickly muttered a supplicatory prayer for the departed Hamîd, ending loudly with the words "The Fâtiha." All present repeated the words of the Fâtiha, and before the "Âmîn" had given place to silence, Sabri proceeded: "I said to Hamîd, 'Come here, O my brother! It is my intèntion to ask you something.'"

"'Yes,' said he to me, 'what thing?'"

"I want to see your sisters hitting the lute. Can you get me into the harîm?"

"Said Hamîd, 'Come!'"

"We entered the house, and 'Take this!' says Hamîd, handing me a shîsha. 'Carry it upstairs!'"

"We went up, Hamîd carrying a lamp, and I carrying the shîsha. At the top of the house we stopped before the door of the harîm. Hamîd put the lamp on the floor, and said to me, 'Give me the shîsha, and hide your moustache!'"

"As I tell you, O Gathering!" says Sabri, "Hamîd

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opened the door of the harîm, and I was hiding my moustache like this" (protruding his lower lip so that it covered the upper one).

"We went in, and some of the women screeched 'What is this? a man! a man!'

" 'Man what?' says Hamîd. 'A boy, this!' and his hand was pressing down on my shoulder, so that I bent my knees and sat on the floor. A lute this! A lute! I never heard anything like it! There, against the further wall, sat the daughters of Abdul Hâdi, playing and singing. Hitting, I tell you, the lute! and their voices! . . . One of the girls was sitting with the lute, hitting . . . I tell you, hitting! . . . the other was holding the drum, and the two of them singing. Said my mind to me: 'What is this, O Sabri? These are not girls. They are afrîts!' "

"What was the appearance of the girls?" asked old Yûsef. "One of them is married to Abu Sâlih, the Zemzemi in Bâb es-Salâm."

"Beautiful!" says Sabri, enthusiastically. "Sweet! I tell you, O Gathering, beautiful like the moon! . . . Wearing silk, and their eyes blackened with kohl, and hands stained with henna. . . . We were in great enjoyment, and then the door opened, and . . . Wallah, O Gathering, entered my mother.

" 'What is this?' she said. 'You here, O son of a pig . . . in the harîm!'

" 'I carried the shîsha, O my mother,' I said to her, 'and now I descend.'

" 'Go, O dog!' she said to me, and I descended."

The recital of these reminiscences was greeted by Sabri's audience with smiles of delight.

"But one of the eyes of Abu Sâlih's wife has a spot in it," said Abdurrahmân.

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“Nothing against her!” rejoined Hasan. “The other eye is the best you could wish for.”

The Mekkans believe that many of their women are skilled in witchcraft. This dark art is said to be employed by a woman to prevent her husband from taking a second wife, or to induce him to do her will in other matters. Upon a bride's joining a *harîm* in which there are already other wives, the latter frequently endeavour to cast a spell upon her, in order to make her ill or mad, so that the husband shall find no more pleasure in her. A woman who has no skill in sorcery procures the assistance of one who possesses the necessary knowledge.

There was a young woman in a house near Abdurrahmân's who was constantly fighting with her mother-in-law and other women in the house. Sometimes her husband would shackle the poor girl with iron fetters, and shut her up in a dark room. She was said to have been bewitched by his other wives. I asked Yûsef how this enchanting was done, but he said he knew not, as it was a practice outside God's religion, and known only to women—“God curse them,” he added.

There are shaykhs who are able to restore a bewitched woman to her normal condition by reciting certain passages from the Korân while looking her in the eyes with mesmeric concentration. The words are afterwards written down on paper, which is then soaked in water, and the patient drinks the mixture. The treatment is said to be infallible in the hands of a really pious and learned man. Yûsef said there are other ways of effecting a cure, and mentioned the case of a girl who was given over to one, Ibn Hishâm, for treatment. He kept her shut up in his house for four

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days, and nobody knew what he did to her, but when she came out again "she was as quiet and tractable as a baby ever afterwards."

As a result of the high mortality rate in Mekka, particularly in times of pestilence, many children become orphans. These are usually adopted by relatives or kinsmen, and in the main they share the fortunes of the foster-parents' children. In some cases, however, where no direct tie of kinship and little true affection exists, these children are looked upon as so much merchandise to be exploited for gain. The boys will be set to work by which they may earn money for their foster-father, and the little girls will be reared with a view to realising as large a dowry as possible when they are old enough to be given in marriage. In order that the latter transaction may prove lucrative, the foster-parents train the little girls in the arts of allurements. When they are ready for marriage, an agent is employed to dispose of them for a good dowry to a man of wealth. Orphan children of the lower classes are sometimes even sold as slaves. These practices are carried on in secret, and are condemned by the majority.

Although polygamy is fairly common in Mekka, the majority of Mekkans have only one wife. Many of them, however, own slave-women whom they take as concubines. The Korânic passage which sanctions polygamy occurs near the commencement of the Chapter entitled *Women*: "Marry those women who are pleasing to you—two, or three, or four. But if ye fear that ye cannot act equitably [to each of them], then [marry] one [only]." From this it might be argued that polygamy, rather than monogamy, is the ideal state.

By limiting the number of wives that a man may

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have at one time to four, the Korân confined polygamy within very narrow bounds, as compared with the licentious customs which prevailed in Arabia before the time of Muhammad. The licence of concubinage, however, remains unlimited, save in so far that the Korân repeatedly insists that one of the most meritorious acts in the sight of God is the manumission of slaves. It is obvious that the tendency of this injunction is to eliminate slavery entirely; and consequently, the ultimate ideal would include the abolition of concubinage, since a free-woman cannot become a concubine without committing adultery, for which the penalty is death.

Divorce is not frequently resorted to, in spite of the trifling nature which characterises it in Islamic law. By the Muhammadan jurists, it is classed among those things which are "disliked," and it is, therefore, reprehensible. A man has merely to say to his wife "I divorce thee," and she is then no longer his wife. He may, however, take her back again without being under the necessity of obtaining her consent. This he may do twice, but on saying "I divorce thee" for the third time, he releases her finally. The latter result may also be compassed at once by the husband's declaring a triple divorce. After this he cannot re-marry her unless, and until, she has married and been divorced by a third party, and then only with her consent. A woman has no direct power to divorce her husband; but in the event of his sexual impotence, cruelty, or neglect of her, she may apply to the Câdi for a decree of divorce if her husband refuses to divorce her.

The Muslim laws which regulate the relations between man and woman compare favourably with the similar laws of Moses.

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I heard of one case in Mekka of a man who had divorced fifteen wives; but in general, the Mekkans who tire of their women on account of barrenness or fading charms, retain them in their harîms, and marry a new wife. This at least gives provision of food and shelter to the unfortunate women, many of whom would become homeless beggars if divorced. A man who already has four wives, and wishes to marry another woman, makes a temporary provision for the wife whom he is thereby obliged to divorce, or he may give her in marriage to a poor relative, or a servant, and himself provide her dowry. Under Islamic law, a woman enjoys complete control of her own possessions, and she may also inherit property. The latter right was generally denied to Arabian women before the time of Muhammad.

The women of Mekka wear few ornaments of jewelry. Most of their finery of this nature is of silver, plated with gold. The use of pure gold for this purpose is prohibited by the religious law, though some of the wealthy wear it, notwithstanding. A heavy chain, from which depends a large Spanish gold coin is frequently worn about the neck. Some of these chains are three-fold, and have small coins hanging from each loop. Plain or roughly engraved rings are worn on the fingers, and a large flat ring on each great toe.

In Turkish times there were a number of immoral women in Mekka, but when the Hijâz became independent during the Great War, King Husayn expelled them from the city. I was told that there were still prostitutes among the poor African women living in the village of huts which lies in the Misfala, but I never saw a sign of this sort of indecorum anywhere in Mekka.

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With regard to slavery, this practice originated as a result of warfare and conquest. Under Islamic law, unbelievers who commit an act of aggression against the Muslims are offered, upon the outbreak of the resulting hostilities, the alternatives of embracing Islâm, of paying tribute and retaining their own religion and property, or of fighting to the death. Under the second of these conditions, the destitute enemies of the Islamic State were often enslaved in default of paying their tribute. The legality of this is doubtful. Under the third condition, they were often captured and enslaved instead of being massacred; and it was held that such captives were still to remain slaves even though they subsequently embraced Islâm, or offered to pay tribute. That which is generally known as the slave traffic—that is, the simple kidnapping of slaves by dealers for trade purposes, as was done extensively in Africa until recent years, and is still done to a slight extent there and elsewhere—is quite illegal in Islamic law.

Now when we consider two important facts, we cannot fail to draw the conclusion that the religion of the Korân, rightly practised, would soon bring about the complete cessation of slavery in the Islamic State, if no hostile act leading to war was committed against that State. The first of these two facts is that the Korânic law does not sanction unprovoked war by its followers on unbelievers. If no aggression occurred, then, no new slaves would ever be taken. The second fact is, that again and again the Korân reiterates the teaching that one of the most acceptable acts in the sight of God is the liberation of slaves. In an ideal Muslim community, therefore, slavery must soon cease to exist.

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Many pious Muhammadans have spent large sums of money in the manumission of slaves. According to Ibn Hajar, the third Khalifa, Othmân, purchased with his private money, and then released, no fewer than 2,400 slaves during his lifetime.

The Korânic verses enjoining the release of slaves seem to have induced a feeling in the owners of these unfortunate creatures that they held them merely on sufferance, and in consequence of this slaves have in all ages been well treated—and are still well treated, as I know from personal observation. I do not suggest that kindness was always, or even frequently, shown to them in the heat of battle at the moment of capture, nor even in the subsequent period before they were allotted or sold to their final owners. But when once they became settled in the homes of their masters they appear to have been consistently treated as junior members of the family.

The slaves in Mekka, all of whom are Muslims, are employed by their owners as domestic servants, door-keepers, water-carriers, grooms, personal attendants and so on. In the oases of Et-Tâif, Wâdi Fâtma, El Husaynîya, and Wâdi Lîmûn, they work at agriculture; and the slaves of the Bedouins act as shepherds and camel-masters. Generally speaking, the slave works for his master as cheerfully as though the latter were his father. The master, for his part, feeds the slave on practically the same food as he himself eats; generally, though not always, clothes him adequately; and invariably treats him with tolerant kindness, however clumsy or foolish he may be.

In truth, such is the special meaning which the word "slave" now bears, by reason of the cruelties which have been inflicted upon beings known under that

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appellation, that it is scarcely correct to apply it to the 'abd or mamlûk of the Muhammadans.

The wealthy Mekkans take a pride in having their slaves taught to chant the Korân and to read. The majority of the slaves are dull and stupid, but some of those kept as personal attendants by the Ashrâf and other prominent men have manners which can only be described as charming. These personal attendants are always clean and well-dressed, and they often carry handsome weapons when escorting their masters.

Most people who own several male slaves also possess female slaves; and the latter are given in marriage to the former. A master may marry his slaves, one to another, at his will; and a slave may have two wives, though few have more than one. Frequently, the male slave of one owner is married to the female slave of another, and in such case the offspring of the union belong to the woman's owner. If a slave-woman bears a child to her owner, he is enjoined to free her and then marry her. In any case the child is free, unless the father repudiates paternity, in which latter case it becomes his slave. I heard of a case of this sort, but such are very infrequent. Some of the poor students, Malays and Indians principally, who settle in Mekka for a term of years in order to study religion, marry slave-women belonging to Mekkans. They are too poor to buy the freedom of the women, and accordingly the issue of such a "marriage" is born into slavery, and becomes the property of the woman's owner. There is something peculiarly barbarous in a man's being married to a woman who is the property of another man; and how far the being who makes such an arrangement can truthfully be designated a man, is perhaps open to argument. They simply purchase the

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right to cohabit with the woman, and the learned excuse the transaction by saying that it is better than indulgence in unnatural vice. The sanctions for unholy transactions such as this will not be found in the Korân. They have been invented at different times by the faqîhs, or jurists, to accord with the wishes of the sultâns, or other masters, whom they served. Other means failing, there always remained the simple method of inventing a false tradition of the Prophet in order to justify the desired measure.

Some masters will permit a slave to employ his spare time in seeking gain, by working as a water-carrier, or at some handicraft. In this way the slave may, in time, amass sufficient money to buy his freedom. A hard master, however, will claim all the earnings of his slave as his own property, and this the law entitles him to do. Slaves are frequently set free on the death of their master, under a clause in his will. In the absence of such a clause, they are inherited by his heirs, together with the rest of his property. They are now so expensive to purchase, that very few are freed during the master's lifetime, save such as are too old to work. Superannuated slaves, male and female, are sometimes freed and turned out by their owners into the street. In such a case they have no recourse but to become beggars. Several of these poor creatures, some of them women, were living in the Haram during my stay in Mekka. They slept on the pavement of the cloisters, grown almost impervious to the discomforts of cold and mosquitos; and by day they sat at the gates, and held out their gaunt claws for alms. I suppose some of them are there still.

A number of new slaves still reach Mekka from the Yemen and from Africa, and occasionally from Asia

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Minor, but the majority are children born of slaves in Mekka.

When the Progress party attained to power in Constantinople, the Turks endeavoured to abolish slavery in the Hijâz. The real ruler of that province, however, was always the Sharîf of Mekka, and against his opposition, supported by that of the Ashrâf and Mekkans generally, the power of the Turks was unable to prevail.

Now by Article Seven of the Treaty of Jidda (signed in May, 1927), Ibn Sa'ûd agrees to co-operate with the British Government, by every means within his power, in the suppression of the slave trade.

XXV

LAWS AND THEIR SOURCE

EL Islâm, the religion revealed to mankind through the medium of Muhammad, teaches absolute unequivocal monotheism. God is One, Eternal, Omnipotent.

The Muhammadans believe that El Islâm constitutes the final and perfect expression of the original true religion which has been followed by mankind, with varying degrees of faithfulness, since the creation. Adam was the first of the prophets of God.

Judaism was the true revelation of God, but it was, in due course, abrogated by Christianity, whose followers were taught by Isa (Jesus Christ) to worship the One God. The Muslims believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is an invention of Christendom, subsequent to the ascension of Christ into Heaven. They believe that the copies of the Pentateuch, and of the Gospel, existing at the present day, have been tampered with and altered drastically, so that they now contain many blasphemies and untruths, and are only fit to be ignored by followers of the true religion.

Christianity was, in its turn, succeeded by El-Islâm, and the latter form of the original religion is the only right way of life for all mankind existing in the world, subsequent to its revelation.

There exists a so-called Gospel, known as the Gospel of Barnabas, in which it is asserted that the apostleship of Muhammad was foretold in plain words by God to Adam. I do not know that this collection of fables is

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set much store by among the more old-fashioned Muslims, as these do not concern themselves much with proofs which seek to support the testimony of the Korân. For such, the Korân itself is sufficient. It is the Word of God, and requires no proof, nor any support. The new, half-Europeanised type of Muhammadans, however, have eagerly seized upon the Gospel of Barnabas, and an Arabic translation of it, entitled "Injîl Barnâba," is printed in Cairo and sold extensively there and in the cities of Syria.

The Gospel of Barnabas is supposed to have been originally written in Latin, or in Spanish, by an European convert to Islâm—possibly one who had been a Christian monk. It was probably written during the Arab occupation of Spain.

In Chapter XXXIX of this book, Jesus Christ, addressing his disciples, is reported as saying:

"Now when Adam had risen upon his feet, he saw in the atmosphere a writing, shining with light like the sun, the text of which was—'There is no god but The God; and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.'

"Whereupon Adam lifted up his voice and said: 'I offer Thee thanks, O Lord my God! because that Thou hast shown grace and hast created me. But I humbly beseech Thee that Thou enlighten me as to what is the meaning of the words—"Muhammad is the Prophet of God."'

"Then God answered, saying, 'Be thou at ease, O my servant, Adam! Verily I say unto thee that thou art indeed the first man whom I have created. And this which thou hast seen, verily it [refers to] thy descendant who shall come unto the world after many years. And he shall be My Prophet, for whose sake I created all things. Who, when he cometh,

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shall give light to the world. He whose soul was preserved in a heavenly light for sixty thousand years before I created any thing.'

"Then Adam humbled himself to God, saying, 'O Lord! Grant that I may have this writing upon the finger-nails of my hands.'

"And God permitted the first man to have that writing upon his thumbs—upon the thumb-nail of his right hand the text 'There is no god but The God'; and upon the thumb-nail of his left hand the text 'Muhammad is the Prophet of God.' Then the first of mankind kissed these words with a paternal affection, and rubbed them upon his eyes and said 'Blessed be that day in which thou [i.e. Muhammad] shalt come unto the world.' "

Thus, according to the Gospel of Barnabas, did the Messiah speak to his disciples.

It may be of interest that Muhammad himself is reported to have said: "He who, upon hearing the muaddin's words—'I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God'—shall say, 'Welcome to my beloved and my consolation, Muhammad ibn Abdulla, God bless and give him peace,' and shall kiss his thumbs and place them upon his eyes, that man shall never become blind nor be afflicted with ophthalmia." Many of the Muslims perform this act as a preventive measure against blindness, whenever they hear the above-mentioned words repeated, in the course of the adân. It was doubtless this tradition of the Prophet which suggested to the author of the Gospel of Barnabas a part of the tale attributed to Jesus Christ, which is narrated in the quotation given above.

The religion of El-Islâm was sent down to the world in a series of messages from God to Muhammad, which

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were borne by God's messenger, the Angel Gabriel. These messages were committed to memory by Muhammad's followers, and the majority of them were also inscribed on stones, on pieces of wood, or on the bones of dead animals. A class of men, known as "readers," came into being, who memorised the whole of the Korân and repeated it in the mosque, or whenever occasion demanded. After the Prophet's death, the whole of the messages were written down in the form of a book. This appears to have been done, principally, because the readers had commenced to differ somewhat in their renderings of the revelation. It is generally believed that the first to standardise the Korân in this way was Othmân, the third Khalîfâ; though Abu Bakr appears to have attempted it. Since the time of Othmân, who was assassinated in 656 A.D., the text has remained unchanged.

The Korân consists, principally, of exhortations to righteousness, of social and religious legislation, and of historical matter. It is regarded as a miracle in itself, and as the source of all knowledge. In the final verse of the Chapter entitled *Yusef* occur the words:

"[This Korân] is not a story which has been forged, but is the confirmation of that which preceded it [i.e. the true Pentateuch and Psalms, and the true Gospel], and a clear explanation of all things, and a guidance, and a mercy, unto people who believe."

The whole of the civil and criminal laws of a Muhammadan community, which is unchanged by foreign influences, are taken from the Korân and the Traditions of the Prophet's practice. Matters not covered by these two sources of law are dealt with according to the result of *Ijmâ*, that is, the unanimous agreement of

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the companions of Muhammad, or if no such case occurred in their time, of the Four Imâns, or the religious heads of the Muslim people at any time. Failing a ruling or a precedent from all of these sources, a decision is arrived at by means of analogy (*El-Qiyâs*), that is, by comparing the case in question with similar cases already settled by the companions of the Prophet, or later authorities, but whose authority for ordering the settlement in question is unknown.

In the event of there arising, to-day, a controversy concerning some matter which had never arisen in Islâm before, and upon which the Korân and Traditions are silent, it would be settled by the general agreement of the learned heads of the four orthodox schools of jurisprudence. Said the Prophet: "My people will never agree in allowing sin."

On one occasion, I suggested to Abdulla ibn Belayhid, the Wahhâbî Chief Câdi of Mekka, that the time had now come when Islâm should be purged of slavery. I reminded him that the Muslimîn are proud to call El-Islâm a progressive religion, and that its sanction of ancient customs should therefore become modified with the progress of the world. He replied that it would be quite possible to abolish slavery by means of "ijmâ-l Muslimîn" (general agreement of the Muhammadans). This I give as an example of El Ijmâ.

The first laws imposed upon the Muslim* are those which command prayer, alms-giving, fasting, and pilgrimage.

Prayer is repeated five times daily: before sunrise, at midday, at mid-afternoon, immediately after sunset,

* The qualification for the title of "Muslim" (i.e. one who surrenders himself to God) is belief in the dogma "There is no god but The God: Muhammad is the Prophet of God."

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and an hour and a half after sunset. There are also many special occasions of prayer, among them being the prayer on the two annual holidays, the Feast of Sacrifices and the feast at the conclusion of the fast of Ramadhân; the prayer repeated on the occurrence of an eclipse of the sun or moon; the prayer for rain, and so on. The special Friday prayer takes the place of the ordinary midday prayer on that day.

Alms-giving is rather taxation. Ez-zakâ (compulsory legal alms) is an annual capital levy of two and a half per centum on all live-stock and gold and silver, whether coin or ornaments. This is collected by the government, and is the sole revenue which a strictly Islamic government may receive. Ibn Sa'ûd compels the Bedouins to pay it. Spoils of war, and the tribute received from non-Muslim subject communities, are to be excepted from this statement, which deals with the revenue contributed by the Muslims themselves.

The giving of voluntary alms (*sadaga*) to the poor, to new converts to Islâm, towards the redemption of slaves, to the debtor who cannot pay his debt, to the fighter in the jihâd, and to the impecunious traveller, is also strongly enjoined upon the Muslim.

Fasting, which to the European would be the most irksome of these ritualistic laws, is the obligation which is more faithfully discharged throughout the Muslim world than is any other. I am convinced that in Mekka almost no man, unless he be ill, shirks the faithful fulfilment of this duty. From an hour and a-half before daybreak until the sun has set, the Muslim fasts completely for twenty-nine consecutive days in each year, namely, the whole of the month of Ramadhân. He may neither eat nor drink anything whatever, nor smoke tobacco, for an average time of fourteen hours

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each day (according to the season of the year in which Ramadhân falls). Women fast also, unless they be pregnant or happen to be nursing very young babies. Children of the age of six or seven years fast for several hours, or for the half of each day.

Pilgrimage is commanded to be performed by every Muslim once in his lifetime, provided: 1 That he is sound in mind; 2 Has reached the age of puberty; 3 Is a free man (i.e. not a slave); 4 Has not to leave a position in which he is indispensable; 5 That the road is safe (it will be recalled that the pilgrimage was pronounced to be non-obligatory in 1925 because of the absence of this condition); 6 He is fit to travel; 7 Possesses sufficient provision for the road, and also a mount, without depriving his children of food, nor incurring debt. (The followers of the Mâliki school may dispense with the seventh condition; Mâlik thought it a merit in a destitute person to beg his way to Mekka.)

Another ordinance (which though not one of the five fundamental duties of a Muslim is of nearly equal importance with them) is the jihâd or holy war. It is the bounden duty of the followers of Muhammad to fight against an enemy who commits a hostile act against any part of the Islamic state. It is understood that this refers to the hostilities of unbelievers. A quarrel among Muslims would, theoretically, be settled at once by the arbitrary intervention of the Khalîfa.

The drinking of intoxicating beverages is forbidden by the Korân, and this prohibition is understood as extending to the smoking of intoxicants also. The eating of pig's flesh is forbidden, though the Muslim, unlike the Jew, may eat the flesh of the camel. Gambling is also illegal.

Before the Wahnâbi occupation, the smoking of

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hashîsh (a preparation of hemp) is said to have been fairly common among the lower orders in Mekka, and an intoxicating drink, called bûza or arak, was also brewed and consumed there. Cocaine, too, was not unknown. It was possible, I believe, to procure arak in Mekka after the arrival of the Wahnâbîs, but only with great difficulty, on account of the risk of discovery. The Nejdiers imposed heavy fines and imprisonment for any offence against these prohibitions.

Many of the criminal laws of Islâm are Semitically drastic.

Capital punishment is inflicted for murder, adultery, paederasty, apostasy (unless the apostate recant), and blasphemy. A free-man may murder a slave without himself being executed, but if he kills a free-man or free-woman he must die, unless the act was committed in self-defence or under potent provocation. In the latter case, the blood price of one hundred camels, or their value, is paid to the relatives of the victim. Even wilful murder may be condoned in this way, with the consent of the relatives. The blood price for a free-woman is half that for a man, while that of a slave is equivalent to his market value. A Muslim, even though he be a slave, is not put to death for the murder of an unbeliever.

Retaliation for injuries is commanded, in accordance with the law "eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and for wounds [a like] retaliation" (Chapter *The Table*). Material compensation, however, may be legally accepted by the injured party.

Flogging (eighty stripes) is the punishment for drunkenness.

A man may be imprisoned for debt, or compelled to work in payment of what he owes. The penalty of

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imprisonment, however, cannot be enforced against an insolvent debtor.

I went once to the Law Court, at the invitation of the Chief Cádi. The Court is situated adjacent to the north-western wall of the Haram, near the gate called Bâb ez-Ziyâda. It consists of three rooms, each of which is some thirty feet square. These rooms, together with another beside the Bâb Durayba, which is now used as a public library, were originally built by the Sultan Salîm I, as a school. In each of them was taught one of the four systems of jurisprudence.

The ceiling of each chamber consists of a lofty dome, from the apex of which hangs a lamp on the end of a long chain. Two only of the rooms are used as law-courts, the third being reserved as a private apartment of the Cádi. They are simply furnished with carpets and cushions, and each of them possesses a large iron-barred window, through which the Haram is visible.

When I arrived the Court was sitting. Abdulla ibn Belayhid, a bent and wizened little man, with a red henna-dyed beard, was sitting on a thick cushion at one side of the room. At his left hand was the iron-barred window, looking into the cloisters. On his knees he held a large book, in which he was writing extracts from the evidence. His clerk, who sat at his right hand, also made entries in a book. The parties to the suit were squatting before him, on the floor, while in the doorway stood two of the Sharta, dressed in Bedouin thawbs and kerchiefs. The old man had an insignificant presence, and a very weak voice; and the contending parties and their supporters were giving him a good deal of trouble with their eager efforts to improve or disprove one another's evidence.

As I entered the room, having previously sent in my

name by one of the policemen, the old gentleman honoured me with his cordial Arab smile, and motioned me to a seat on the cushions. The case proceeded for another ten minutes, when everybody rose and, helping his Honour to his feet, continued to support him for some time, as though they feared he might faint at any moment. But, no! he bore up; and then they all kissed his hand, policemen and plaintiffs, defendants and door-keepers, clerk and witnesses. The case would be resumed at el 'asr. This fact having been ascertained, they moved towards the door. Abdulla came and took me affectionately by the arm, and we passed into the inner room. Here we were served with luncheon by one of the policemen—rice and meat-balls followed by a sweetmeat known as kunâfa. In the midst of the repast the adân sounded, calling to mid-day prayers. As we stood up to say our prayers we could see the Kaaba through the window.

After prayers Abdulla began to discourse of the roads in the Hijâz. Had I a book which described them? I promised to lend him a small volume which dealt with that subject. Now the frontispiece of that book consisted of a portrait of the author—an Egyptian, and when the old man subsequently returned it, I found that the poor author's face had been obliterated. The making of pictures of living creatures is unlawful among strict Muslims. I am sure that the old man did not erase that offending visage. I have no doubt the pious deed was performed by one of his sons. But whoever did it improved the value of the book considerably, providing by that poor scrubbed portrait a tale of stern obedience to God's commands. Yet, in the Korân, the Muhammadans have no such definite command to avoid the making of likenesses of natural

objects as is contained in Exodus: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, *nor the likeness of anything* that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth."

A servant of the Câdi now came in and reported the result of his efforts to procure a suitable slave-girl for the old gentleman. He had recently married a new wife, a little Mekkan girl, scarcely arrived at the age of puberty, as I heard, and wanted an additional slave-girl in his house for that reason.

Next there came in the policeman who had served us with luncheon, and who, having deposited the tray before us, had been invited by Abdulla to join us, which he did. This policeman was the Câdi's personal attendant, and was accustomed to follow his Chief about in close company with his shadow. At the gate of the Mosque it was his business to take charge of the old man's sandals, and to carry them until they were required again.

The policeman brought with him two little orphan children, who had come from the besieged city of El Medîna in company with a crowd of refugees. Abdulla, out of the human kindness of his heart, had adopted these two little ones. Now they ran to him and kissed his hand, and answered his smiling questions as to whether they had eaten, whether they liked their new clothes, with "Yes, O my sir!" and "Praise to God!"

Then there came in a Bedouin youth, accompanied by two others. He desired to marry the cousin of one of his companions. All three youths kissed Abdulla's hand, which he allowed them to do, for it is permitted by the customs prevailing in Hâil, and these youths were tribesmen of Shammar. In public I have frequently seen the Câdi snatch his hand away from one

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who would kiss it, and reprove him with stern words. Doubtless, however, he could not find it in his heart to reprove the northern custom when he heard the northern speech: he himself was a native of Hâil.

Manners are gentler in the northern marches of Arabia than they are in the southern Wahnâbî country about er-Riâdh, and fanaticism is hardly known there. Abdulla had not been reared among the original Wahnâbî tribes. As a subject of Ibn Rashîd, he had been opposed to the Wahnâbîs until a few years before, when Ibn Sa'ûd had captured Hâil and brought the rule of the Rashîd dynasty to an end. I imagine that the old man was given the exceedingly important position of Chief Câdi of the Hijâz for the reason that, while earnestly believing in the tenets of the Wahnâbîs, he was not a fanatic: in short, he could be relied upon to do as Ibn Sa'ûd told him. The real Wahnâbî 'ulemâ, on the other hand, held the inconvenient opinion that the Sultân ought to be guided by them.

The Câdi enquired as to which of his visitors was the girl's guardian; and having ascertained that, he formally asked him whether he was willing to hand the girl over to the suitor for her hand. The guardian said that he consented. Thereupon, Abdulla took a tooth-stick from his pocket, and holding it in his right hand, began to clean his teeth. At the same time he proceeded to deliver instructions in a fatherly manner to the Bedouins, telling them exactly what they were to say in his presence in order to complete the marriage. Acting as he bid them, the guardian and the bridegroom grasped each other's right hands. The guardian then avowed his readiness to give the girl in marriage to the other for a dowry of two mejîdis and a she-camel. The bridegroom, prompted by Abdulla, accepted this,

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and the marriage was an accomplished fact. Holding the tooth-stick between his teeth for a moment, the Câdi again submitted to have his hand kissed by the Bedouins, and then the latter strode quickly from the room. I asked Abdulla "Was it not necessary to produce the girl?"

"No, O my son!" said he. "The guardian and the witness are sufficient."

The Câdi demanded no fee, nor was he offered one, and had he been engaged in teaching his children how to say "Peace be upon you!" or something equally simple, he could not have done it more casually.

I sat for some time conversing with the old man. He told me that in Hâil he was accustomed to settle sometimes more than a hundred disputes in a single morning. I left him before el 'asr, at which hour he was to resume his session in the court.

In the East—and by the East I mean the unchanged patriarchal East—it is felt that when justice is dispensed by a stranger to the disputants, within the walls of a court-house, it loses the element of humanity to some extent, and becomes not justice, but blind justice.

The Mekkans, then, prefer, whenever possible, to settle their disputes among themselves, with the assistance of some old shaykh whom they know, and who, even though he deliver judgment against them, will contrive to leave them without a feeling of grievance.

One morning an impressive company assembled in Abdurrahmân's mag'od. It appeared that one, Abdur Razzâg, went travelling, and that before leaving Mekka he had locked up his house and handed the keys to Shafîg, who was a relative of his by marriage. Shafîg was to inspect the house once a week, in order to ascertain that nobody had broken into it. The charge

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now made against Shafîg was, that during Abdur Razzâg's absence he duly made his weekly inspection, but unduly brought away with him quantities of grain, flour, oil, and other articles, which were stored in the house. These things had been put by Shafîg to his own use. Upon the return of Abdur Razzâg, Shafîg faithfully surrendered the keys to their owner, telling him that everything in his house was as he had left it. Upon going to his house, however, Abdur Razzâg discovered that goods of the value of £120 were missing. The figure is Abdur Razzâg's. Shafîg admitted cordially that he had borrowed a trifling quantity of grain and flour, for which he was quite willing to pay. "Take four guineas or five," says Shafîg with wide liberality, "or whatever you say."

Lengthy and gesticulatory argument, extending over a period of days, having failed to result in a settlement of the dispute, to-day's meeting of the elders has been summoned. The judges are: Muhammad Nûr, an enormous muttawwif from Sûk el-Layl, possessing a thunderous voice; Abdul Hâdi, a thin man with a sharp-witted air, but only one eye; and Hâfiz, a fat, jolly, and sensual-looking man. These three sit in line, with their backs to the iron-barred window. Abdur Razzâg is accompanied by two of his friends, while Amm Yûsef and Abdurrahmân, assisted by Hasan and Sabri, are the supporters of Shafîg.

First of all, Abdur Razzâg tells his story with great indignation, everybody else remaining silent. When he has finished, Shafîg, who is squatting languidly in the middle of the circle, is called upon for his version of the occurrence. This, being difficult of proof, is exceedingly verbose. His explanation of the matter, put briefly, is that a thief broke into the house one night.

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This, he says, he heard from a third person, who, however, he does not call to corroborate his story.

Upon the conclusion of Shafîg's speech, which he delivers with a sort of sad restraint, which seems to be precisely the right tone for one falsely accused, Abdur Razzâg bursts forth into indignant comment. He is sharply silenced by the enormous mutawwif. The judges then ask him to state the value of the missing property. For answer, he hands them three pages of foolscap, on which is written a list of the stolen articles. The thin man places the papers against his solitary eye, and reading the figure £120, he smiles broadly at Hâfiz.

"O Shafîg," says the enormous mutawwif, "you have no right to take a box of matches, nor a grain of wheat of people's property—neither from a relative, nor a stranger."

"Look here!" says the one-eyed man to Abdur Razzâg, "the right is with you. But what will you do? Will you go to the Law Court, and demand your right, and do this, and do that; or will you accept what we rule?"

Here everybody present, including Shafîg, animatedly bombard Abdur Razzâg with advice, until Muhammad Nûr, seeing, rather than hearing, him acquiesce in accepting their ruling, shouts "Patience! Listen to my speech!"

At once all are silent.

"And you, Shafîg! Will you accept our judgment?" he proceeds.

"For good, if it please Allah," says Shafîg piously.

"Good!" comment the judges, in chorus.

"We are not here to sentence you to go to prison, nor to force you to anything," says my host, Abdur-

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rahmân, diplomatically. "You have called upon us to judge between you, and what we want is to rule the matter so that you may both be satisfied, and be friends. Not so, O Gathering?"

"God bless you, O my brother!" shouts Muhammad Nûr in delighted approval.

At this point, coffee arrives from Shafîg's house across the way, and we all sip.

All the while the case is proceeding, these admirable judges are keenly, but covertly, observing the two principals. They note from every change of expression, every glance of the eye, and every verbal remark, how the course of the trial is appealing to each party. If either the plaintiff or the defendant appears to be really disconcerted by the course to which justice is inclining, then it is the business of Their Honours to lift him onto a happier plane, by making a move in his favour. Such a move, however, must be carefully calculated so as not to unbalance the other party seriously. As we shall see, this delicate process of adjustment goes on until, finally, with a quick run-in, justice is achieved amid general plaudits and enthusiasm.

"What we have to do," says one-eyed Abdul Hâdi, as he sips his coffee, "is to decide what is a fair sum for Shafîg to pay. A hundred and twenty guineas," says he, with a tolerant smile at the company, "is . . . Tell me, Abdur Razzâg! you will accept how much?"

Abdur Razzâg mumbles undecidedly, and Amm Yûsef gets a word in for Shafîg by saying quickly, "We will say fifteen guineas."

"Fifteen guineas. Do you accept this?" asks Abdur-rahmân.

The three judges look smilingly on.

"I have agreed to accept your ruling," says Abdur

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Razzâg. "But fifteen guineas! I do not accept this. Never!"

"Hear the Fâtiha, O Gathering!" says Shafîg, with an air of righteous detachment from worldly affairs. He had been intently watching his opponent, waiting tensely to hear him accept the fifteen guineas. But he had refused, so now—the Fâtiha and piety.

"In the Name of God, The Very Merciful . . ." repeats Shafîg with saintly fervour, his right hand still grasping the mouth-piece of his shîsha, his coffee-cup at his knee.

"Amîn!" say all present, as Shafîg, having come to the end of the Fâtiha, recommences to draw at his shîsha.

"See here, Shafîg!" says Hâfiz, "it is quite understood that you are no thief. To take a little of the property of . . ."

"Do not say that word!" (meaning "thief") says Shafîg, with a grave and wounded air.

"No! Good!" says Hâfiz. "The meaning of my speech is that it is understood that you did not carry away the things. To take a little of . . ."

"I take refuge in God from that word. That word is not good," says the wronged but patient Shafîg, unable to forget it.

"I say the last word!" shouts the enormous mutawwif, thinking that the moment is ripe for judgment. "Shafîg will pay to Abdur Razzâg five guineas now, and will also give him a writing for fifteen guineas to be paid in the Hajj. . . . Do you agree?" his voice rises to a magnificent shout in order that he may be heard above the general burst of verbal admiration which greets this historic judgment.

Abdur Razzâg at last accepts, in rather an uncertain

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manner. Shafîg then commences a splendid speech, in which he lays stress on his perfect blamelessness, but his effort is quickly drowned by the voices of everybody present, who are joking and exclaiming in their relief at the conclusion of the case. In the midst of this uproar, the three judges smilingly rise, adjust their belts and turbans, and saying, "In the keeping of God!" they leave, amid the sustained greetings and compliments of all present.

Abdur Razzâg valued his lost property at £120, so that it is quite possible that it was worth £30. Shafîg pays £20, and thus secures a good bargain. But the important point is that everybody, if not satisfied, is at least resigned, and the day after to-morrow the two principals will be cheating hâjjis in amicable partnership once more. If justice had been dealt out, one of the parties, if not both of them, would have felt himself wronged. By the Mekkan method, even the offender is made to feel more or less satisfied—more so, perhaps, than the complainant in many cases. They do not seek justice so much as that comfortable feeling which comes of putting one's affairs into the hands of somebody whom one likes.

As for their theory of business, I have many times heard Shafîg protest: "What we (meaning himself) want, O my brother, is a little increase. We buy goods, and if we can sell them with a little advantage we are greatly pleased. We do not understand the taking of other people's property. That is unlawful. We do not profit very much, but we take nothing save the lawful. And Allah Most High helps those who follow the straight path."

XXVI

THE FAST OF RAMADHÂN

"HAD I but two hundred or three hundred guineas," said Shafîg, between the whiffs of his shîsha, "I could profit much from slaves. I know a place of slaves."

"Where is that?" I enquired.

"Above from El Gunfuda," he replied, "on the coast of the sea between Birk and El Hodayda, to the south."

I was sitting with the cronies in Abdurrahmân's mag'od. It was near the hour of the midday prayer, and without the iron-barred window the narrow lane was vivid with burning sunlight. But in this bottom room of the tall house the air was cool and dank. A dingy air-shaft, a foot in width, ran up to the roof, and iron gratings opened into it on every landing of the dark stairway.

"And those slaves—are they Yemenîsor Habashîs?"* asked Abdul Fattâh.

"Yemenîs," replied Shafîg. "They are said to be children stolen from their parents in the inner wilderness of the Yemen. And Allah is More Knowing. There are Habashîs also."

"But when they bring the Habashîs from Africa, O my uncle," I said, "do they land them at El Gunfuda?"

"No!" said he. "They land them more to southward near El Hodayda; for there the distance between

* Abyssinians.

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Arabia and Africa is not great. Their desire is to pass the sea quickly."

"They say that some of the people of the Yemen sell their own children," said Hasan.

"I take refuge in God!" exclaimed Shafîg. "But there are people who own men-slaves and women-slaves; so they let them breed, in order that they may profit by selling the children."

"Like the cattle!" I said. "In Egypt and in Syria slavery has ceased. It is unlawful with them, as is known to you. Tell me—if a slave is dissatisfied with his lot, is it not his right to demand to be sold to another master?"

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân with his ever-ready urbanity and desire to impart information. The Arabs are always prepared to teach and instruct, however meagre their knowledge of the subject in hand may be. They are a race of born teachers. It is no wonder that they carried their religion over half the world in a single century, and had it so readily accepted. The sword was the least effective of their means of proselytism. Whenever the desert men forgot their loot-lust and laid aside their swords, giving place to the doctors of religion, then it was that Islâm made its amazing progress. Christian, Jewish, Magian, Hindu, idolatrous, and other communities, under the threat of the sword, elected to pay tribute to the Islamic State and to continue in their own religion. But many of them eagerly embraced the religion of Muhammad when once the ignorant nomad gave place to the scholar and the teacher. He who rails at the "religion of the sword" rails at a myth.

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân. "In the days of the Turks, there was a slave-girl—the pro-

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perty of Muhammad Nûr, O Gathering—who, on a certain day, went and sat on the steps of the Hamîdîya after el‘asr. Nobody took any notice of her, and Muhammad Râtib, the Turkish Director of Public Security, went out to pray the sunset prayer in the Haram, without observing her. He did not return to the Hamîdîya after prayers; and having sat on the steps until el ‘eshâ, the slave-girl crept inside. The sergeant of police asked her what she wanted. She told him that she belonged to Muhammad Nûr, and that her mistress had beaten her. As I tell you, O Gathering! Now when she complained to her master, he beat her also. Thus she said. So when Muhammad Nûr beat her she told him that she was not happy in his house, and asked him to send her to the slave-market. Then he beat her again, so she ran out of the house. And now, she said to the sergeant, she feared to return. They told her to sleep on a bench in the Hamîdîya that night; and in the morning when Muhammad Râtib came, they informed him of the matter. At once he sent for Muhammad Nûr, and when he had satisfied himself that the right was with the slave-girl, he called in a dallâl and handed her over to him to be sold, in accordance with her desire.”

“But the money?” said Hasan. “Did not Muhammad Nûr receive the money for her?”

“Ay, yes!” replied Abdurrahmân. “He received the money naturally. Or perchance the police took something of it. That we know not. Allah is More Knowing!”

“The Turks lived by embezzlement,” said Amm Yûsef. “In their day, you could not get your right, save by bribery.”

The adân had sounded during the latter part of

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this conversation. As Amm Yûsef made an end, we rose, and having hastily performed the wudhû ablution, passed out of the house and went through the dark passage-ways which led to the Dâûdiya gate of the Haram.

A lunar year had nearly passed over me in the Island of the Arabs, and the fasting-month of Ramadhân was at hand. In the Korân, Chapter *The Cow*, it is written:

“O ye who believe! Unto you fasting has been ordained, even as it was ordained unto those before you, that ye may become godly. . . . [Ye shall fast throughout] the month of Ramadhân in which the Korân was sent down—as a guidance to men, and clear proofs of [this] guidance, and of the distinction between good and evil. Therefore he who is present [in his own town] in this month, let him fast during the same. But he who is sick, or on a journey [let him fast an equal] number of other days. In this, God desires ease for you. He would not that you should suffer travail. That ye may fulfil the number [of days] and magnify God that He has guided you: and that ye may give thanks.”

In the Mekkan newspaper “Umm el Kura,” a notice to the following effect had been inserted by request of the Chief Câdi:—

“Let all the dwellers in Mekka the Honoured and her neighbourhood be alert to descry the new moon of the blessed month of Ramadhân on Monday night next ensuing. Whoever sees it is requested to hasten to the Supreme Law Court in Mekka and give notice thereof.”

In due course, “one spied the little crescent all

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were seeking," and the commencement of the month-long fast was proclaimed. It was the 15th of March, 1926, and already the summer heat was upon us. The red blossoms which for several weeks had covered the solitary lote trees which stand in some of the courtyards of Mekka had not yet fallen. These scattered trees are the only vegetation found in the Holy City, with the exception of a few clumps of tamarisk. They stand in the walled courtyards of some of the houses, and several of them are of a magnificent size. The tree is always green, and soon after the rains it puts forth new shoots of a more delicate tint. In March it blossoms, and three months later the little round nabg fruits are falling from its branches. In the courtyard of an old hospice, called Ed-Dâûdiya, there grew a fine specimen of this tree, which I could look at from my window. It seemed to me a thing of rare beauty and luxuriance, and out of its thick foliage came the joyous chirping of myriads of sparrows.

Now life in the old city took on a different aspect. Every night at about the hour of half-past eight by Arabic time (2.30 a.m.), in the darkness before dawn, a gun was fired from the Fort of Jiyâd. This gave notice of the arrival of the hour of the "sahûr," the meal before dawn. Two hours later, the gun was fired a second time, giving notice of the "imsâk," the abstention. During those two hours, the sleepy Muslimîn rose from their beds and despatched the last meal which they might eat before the ensuing sunset. At this early hour the Mekkans commonly ate the cold rice and meat left at the evening meal, followed by dates and finjâns of tea. The moment the second gun-shot is heard, those who have not finished eating quickly swallow the last mouthfuls. They then mentally declare

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their "intention" of fasting during the ensuing daylight hours. No religious rite is of any value among the Muhammadans unless it is preceded by this "intention."

Those who have eaten their saḥûr meal soon after the first gun-shot will either lie down to sleep again until the hour of the dawn prayer (about 4.45 a.m.) or sit to read the Korân aloud. After praying the dawn prayer in the Haram, the Mekkans return to their houses, and enter their private apartments to sleep. The more religious among them read aloud a thirtieth part of the Korân every morning during Ramadhân, and thus go completely through the Book during the month. Some read as much as a quarter of the volume every day—reading the whole some seven times during the month. A person walking in the lanes of Mekka on a Ramadhân morning hears voices chanting the Korân in nearly every house. Many do their chanting in the cloisters of the Haram. Thus, with sleeping and reading and praying, the Muslims spend the long slow hours until sunset.

During Ramadhân, Mekka is usually somewhat crowded with pilgrims, as many foreigners like to arrive in the Sacred City in time to spend the fasting month there. They perform the rites of the Hajj two months later.

At the hour of el'asr a number of shaykhs are usually to be seen sitting in the Haram delivering theological lectures. Some of these are Mekkans, while others are pilgrims from the Arabic border countries. They perform this voluntary work of preaching in order that they may benefit by the peculiar blessing which is believed to come to one who does good deeds in this, the most holy spot on earth.

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As the hour of sunset approaches, the Mosque becomes ever more crowded, until the pavement beneath the cloisters is almost completely covered with turbaned figures sitting cross-legged on their prayer mats. Many chant the Korân in an undertone, swaying their bodies from side to side; others sit talking among themselves, or staring at the Kaaba. Most of them have a small bundle of dates and bread, tied in a handkerchief. Here the famished multitude sits, patiently waiting for sunset. At last the gun booms out from the hill-top of Jiyâd. Instantly a buzzing murmur is heard all over the great quadrangle, of many voices giving praise to God. The handkerchiefs of food, the knots of which have already been loosened, are now spread open; and repeating the brief Muslim word of grace, the ravenous fasters eat a few dates or a piece of bread. Those who have food, gently invite others who sit near them to partake of their fragmentary repast. Thus I was usually supplied with a draught of Zemzem water, a morsel of bread, and a few dates by Sayyid Hasan the Zemzemi.

While the members of the assembled multitude are thus relieving their hunger, the muaddins in the minarets are already chanting forth the adân for the sunset prayer. Now all rise, wiping their lips, to perform their devotions. Prayers being over, they quickly disperse to their houses.

At no time have I seen the Haram so deserted as during the first hour following the sunset prayer in Ramadhân. Only a few ragged dervishes remain, such as carry their every possession with them. Sitting on now in the Mosque, they break their fast with the wretched fragments of food which have been bestowed in alms upon them.

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Returning to his house after prayers, the Mekkan eats plentifully of a white soup, of wheat boiled in meat broth. This is followed, after an interval of half-an-hour, by the usual dinner-dishes of meat, rice, and vegetables. At this meal, the principal one of the Ramadhân day, the Mekkan sits for perhaps an hour—eating, drinking tea, and smoking. Later on, he will sit with his cronies until midnight, with an interval for the purpose of performing the ‘eshâ prayer in the Haram. Those of a more religious order say long supererogatory prayers during the nights of the second half of this month. Many of the Mekkans remain awake, praying or amusing themselves, until the sahûr gun is fired.

Frequently, accompanied by Abd esh-Shukûr, or alone, I visited acquaintances among the sharîfs and religious shaykhs, after the Ramadhân dinner. At their houses I drank finjans of coffee and exchanged compliments and political gossip. After that I would usually return to our company in the mag‘od, where the conversation, if less polite, was more interesting.

One night Shafîg began to speak of his forthcoming journey to the Yemen, where he would sell town wares, or barter them for dukhn grain.

“I must buy samn for the house,” said he, thoughtfully. He meant—samn for the use of his wife and children during his absence.

“And tobacco!” said Sabri, slyly.

“Ay, Wallah, tobacco!” responded Shafîg, with a brief grin. His wife was for ever imbibing tobacco-smoke, as the cronies well knew by the frequency with which she sent her little son to the sûk to buy the weed for her shîsha.

“I had a female in the house once,” said Uncle

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Yûsef, reminiscently, "she died. . . . When I went travelling I used to say to her: 'Rice is with you. Samn is with you. Charcoal, wood, and oil are with you. Wheat is with you. All with you . . . in the house. That which you need beyond these is meat and fresh vegetables only. Here is money for meat and fresh vegetables!' And when I returned with the hâjjis, O Gathering!" continued the old gentleman, appreciatively, "she still had something left of the money. She had gained money from here and from there—from the neighbours—with her needle. But she died. God show her mercy! She was a good female."

"That is good!" commented Abdurrahmân.

"Known!" said old Yûsef. "Not indebted! Here a debt and there a debt; and people demanding the money of you when you return."

"Indebted!" chorused Abdurrahmân. "Debt to the grain-merchant. Debt for firewood. Debt to the chandler's shop. This is good!"

"Will you not marry one now, Uncle Yûsef, and you are as strong as a youth?" suggested Sabri. "Perchance you will find her equal, if Allah wills."

"Whom I have with me now in my house will suffice me," replied the old man, complacently stroking his beard. "But will you not find a girl for Hâjj Ahmad?"

"Hâjj Ahmad wants a slave-girl," said Abdurrahmân. "He does not wish to marry in Mekka."

They remembered my visit to the slave-market. I must have shown more interest on that occasion than I had intended.

"Marriage is better for thee, Hâjj Ahmad," said Hasan. "We will bespeak my cousin for thee. She is among the most beautiful of girls, only her teeth are as the teeth of a she-camel."

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Here the company laughed.

"How then could I leave her when I wish to travel, she being so beautiful?" I said.

"Take her with thee," said Hasan, "with all pleasure!"

Shafîg had been gazing through the iron bars of the window while he smoked his shîsha placidly. Now he suddenly cried out to somebody in the dark lane without: "Welcome, O my sir! Do us the favour! Enter!" and turning to the sitting company, he said: "My father has come!"

Looking through the iron bars of the inner partition, I saw by the dim light of the lamp a small white-bearded old man, hobbling carefully over the threshold into the entrance-hall. He wore a black jubba, a white turban, gold-rimmed spectacles, and an expression of severity.

The sitters rose as one man, while the old shaykh stumbled slowly up the stone steps leading to the mag'od. Abdurrahmân and Shafîg went forward, with smiling faces and solicitous bearing, to conduct him to the window-seat.

"Peace be upon you!" the old man said; and all present responded together.

Slowly he lowered himself on to the cushions, asking blessings the while upon those who were assisting him.

"Up, Abdul Fattâh, and fetch coffee. Delay not!" cried Abdurrahmân.

"No! Excess of kindness, this!" said the old man. "Give me to drink of water, and God bless you!"

Water was poured out to him from the clay water-bottle, and Abdul Fattah departed to fetch the coffee, as he was bidden.

Now all leaned forward to enquire as to the old man's

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health, and to thank God for the safety of his return. For he had left the Sacred City when King Husayn fled before the onset of the Wahhâbîs. For over a year he had travelled in Syria and Egypt, living on the bounty of some of the many pilgrims whom he had conducted in the rites of the Hajj in former years. In the Muhammadan countries the Mekkans—"neighbours of Allah"—are much venerated, and they usually return from a journey abroad with far more money than they had when they set out.

"When I reached Port Said," said Muhammad el Harîrî—for that was the old man's name—"I asked a man in the street to direct me to a caravanserai without a bug or a flea in it."

The old man spoke in a loud hearty voice, and the cronies gave him their delighted attention. It was thus that he proceeded with his narrative:—

"'Good!' said the man to me. 'The best for you is to go to the Shaykh el Ahmadi.'"

"'I will go if God wills,' I said to him. 'Where is his house?'"

"I thought El Ahmadi must be the shaykh of a system,"* continued El Harîrî. "The Shaykh el Ahmadi, said I to myself, must be a pious man and one who tolerates neither flea nor bug. O Muhammad el Harîrî, Allah has directed thee!"

"But when I reached the house and went inside, with the boy carrying my saddle-bags and my mat, I looked round at the place, and—what think you, O Gathering?—it was a wine shop!" cried the old man indignantly.

The sitters roared with laughter, and spluttered

* i.e. Shaykh of a religious system, a system of supererogatory devotions: that is to say, shaykh of a dervish order.

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pious exclamations which were intended to express disgust. The old man was providing very good fun, seeing which, he allowed a faint smile to hover about his mouth for a moment. Then his face resumed its expression of indignation.

"I take refuge in God from Satan the Stoned!" cried Abdurrahmân, endeavouring to control his mirth within the bounds of decorum.

"There is no power and no strength save in God!" said Abd esh-Shukûr.

"When I entered the inn," resumed the old man, "the owner of the place, the cursed one, said to me, 'Welcome! Come in! How is thy state, O Shaykh? Drink a little of this' . . . And, Wallah, O Gathering! he took up a bottle and would have poured out for me. But I said, 'What is this? Sherbet?'. . . The son of a dog laughed at that, and said, 'No, O my sir! Sherbet what? This is wine!' "

"Allah Akbar!" exclaimed Hasan. "Was he a Muslim?"

"Patience! Listen!" replied the old man. "I take refuge in God! He poured some of the unlawful into a glass and drank it. Wallah, O Gathering, I took my stick, and I said to him, 'Art thou a Muslim?'

"'Ay, yes!' said the accursed one; and he laughed 'Yes! a Muslim!'

"I raised my stick in order to hit him, but he retreated; and still he laughed. Then I told the boy to carry my baggage to the mosque, and there I slept . . . And there is no power and no strength save in God—The High, The Tremendous!"

"I take refuge in God!" exclaimed the cronies in disgust, and finding the matter so serious their faces no longer showed amusement at the old man's tale.

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"In Tanta,* I was sitting in the Fayyûmi's coffee-house," proceeded El Harîrî, "when a Muslim came in with a Jew. Then those two began to dispute in matters of religion; and, by and by, the Jew said, 'Abraham was a Jew!' "

"Allah Akbar!" cried the cronies in genuine horror. "I ask pardon of God"—because that their ears had heard such a wicked saying.

" 'Abraham a Jew!' I shouted," continued the old man, while the company frowned and stared earnestly upon him. " 'You sit there in front of the Muslimîn and say that Abraham was a Jew! When the Book of Almighty God tells us plainly that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian!' †

"Said the unbeliever—'He was a Jew!'

"If it is not as I tell you, O Gathering, you may shave my beard!" proceeded El Harîrî to his frowning audience. "I said again to that hound, 'Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian.'

"Once more the unbeliever repeated, 'He was a Jew.'

"At that I rose up instantly, and raised my stick that I might thrash the accursed one, but the company withheld me."

"In those lands they speak with freedom," said Abdurrahmân, mildly.

"That, of a truth, is freedom," said the old man, "Allah curse the unbelievers!"

The cronies took up the old man's curse, and repeated it to and fro between them, while, looking

* A large town in lower Egypt.

† That is, Abraham was not by religion a Jew nor a Christian. The Korân implies that Abraham, having lived and died before the time of Moses and of Jesus Christ, could not have been a follower of their laws. (Chapter *The Family of 'Imrân*.)

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round that circle of dusky faces, I saw a new light of a fanatical hatred flashing in their sombre eyes.

"In Tarablus of Syria," continued El Harîrî, after a pause, "I knocked at the door of a house and enquired for Hâmid the Baker, for I thought that was the place where he dwelt. Hâmid was one of my hâjjis in a former year, and I wanted to greet him. He would arrange my matter (i.e. food and lodging) in Tarablus . . . A man opened unto me, and I said to him, 'Peace be upon you! Is this the house of Hâmid?'"

"Said the man, 'What Hâmid?'"

"'Hâmid the Baker,' I said to him.

"'I know him not,' said he, 'What is the name of his wife?'"

In shocked tones, the sitters in the mag'od murmured, "I take refuge in God." With a shrug El Harîrî continued his narrative.

"'The name of his wife!' I said to him, 'Do I know the name of another man's wife?'"

"'Well, then, what is the name of his daughter?' said that mannerless hound."

Again the cronies murmured their disapproval; while the old man looked aghast at the memory of the debased customs and practices which he had witnessed during his travels.

"What could I do?" he continued. "I left him. But what manners! Allah preserve us! In Egypt and Syria they take their customs, Wallah, from the Franks and the unbelievers. I am an old man,"* said he, touching his white beard, "but, Wallah, I was ashamed."

"What would you?" said Amm Yûsef. "Do they

* "Rajul ikhtiyâr," literally "a man of option": i.e. one upon whom old age had conferred the right to act as he pleases, regardless of the general custom. In the present instance it implies that having no longer any carnal need of women, by reason of his age,

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not live always among the unbelievers and idolators! Wallah, I have seen, in Syria, people who touch their two shoulders with their right hands, and then touch the forehead and the breast. And when they do that they gaze up at the heavens. These are star-worshippers. Think you that a man can dwell among such as these, and not have his religion and faith ruined?"

"The world is changing," said Abdurrahmân, sympathetically.

"Changing!" exclaimed the old man, vehemently. "The world has gone to ruin. Look at children, in these days, how they deal with their parents! Almighty God commands us in His Book—'Say not to them 'Fie!' nor controvert them; but speak to them kindly.'* Whereas now they call their parents 'dog' and 'cursed one,' and Allah commands them not to abuse them with so much as 'Fie!' "

Shafîg lowered his eyes deferentially as his father made these remarks, and the cronies shook their heads wisely.

"Have you any other news from Egypt, O my sir?" I asked. "Were you not in Tanta on the Prophet's birthday when a number of Egyptians were killed in the crowd?"

"Ha! The bridge!" cried he. "Wallah, I had been on the bridge myself but for the kindness of Allah. A great press of people were crossing the bridge, and a second crowd coming from the other side. Then the bridge collapsed, and two hundred people were killed. They say the Sultan or the King, or whatever he is, gave two thousand guineas to the families of the killed.

El Harîrî was at liberty to please himself as to whether he looked upon or discussed another man's wife, or not.

* In Chapter *The Night-Journey*.

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Two thousand guineas, O Muslims! And when one Inkilizi was killed, the Egyptian Government had to pay half a million guineas! See the state of the Muslimîn, brothers! The English placed guns and troops round about the Parliament-house. 'And,' said they, 'no member shall go out alive until you agree to pay the money, O Egyptians!' "

In these highly coloured terms the old man referred to the fact that the British High Commissioner had taken a regiment of cavalry with him as an escort when he went to the Egyptian Parliament-house to propound the terms imposed by the British Government, after the assassination of the English Sirdar of the Egyptian Army in Cairo (1924).

"You have travelled much, O sir!" I said. "Do you not find that travel fatigues you?"

"Listen!" said he earnestly. "Do I go by myself? Is it by my own power that I travel? . . . I go by the power of The One—The Conqueror."

"His praise and greatness!" exclaimed the company.

"They told me in Egypt," resumed the old man, "that there was nothing to eat in Mekka—nor bread, nor rice, nor meat. But I put my faith in God, and mounted the sea to Jidda. And when I arrived at Jidda I could find no rafîg. I searched for one, but found none. 'Good,' I said. 'Then I will put my leg, over the back of a camel, and leave the shugdufs.' So I put my trust in God, and came riding like a Bedouin!"

"Praise to God for your safe arrival!" we exclaimed in a hearty chorus. El Harîrî, having drunk his coffee, began to get up, the company rising as one man that they might assist him.

XXVII

FINAL DEPARTURE FROM MEKKA

I HAD decided to journey to El Medina at the earliest suitable opportunity after my return from Et-Tâif. Now I heard in our Mag'od that a party of Medinans were leaving Mekka on deluls, bound for the Prophet's city. I asked Abdurrahmân to endeavour to arrange for me to go with them; and, accordingly, he brought two of them to our house on the following morning, in order that I might discuss with them the arrangements for my journey. They were muzowwirs—a class of men whose profession, in El Medîna, is similar to that of the mutawwifs in Mekka. The word “mutawwif” is derived from “tawâf,” the circumambulating the Kaaba. No tawâf is performed in El Medîna, and consequently there are no mutawwifs there. The Muslim's object in making the journey to El Medîna is simply to “visit” the Prophet's tomb in the Great Mosque there. The guides in El Medîna are therefore termed, in the singular, “muzowwir”, that is, “one who causes to visit” or “who takes another on a visit.”

It was duly arranged that I should travel with this party, which numbered five persons exclusive of myself, and that they would procure a delul for me. The two muzowwirs then left us, promising to return and complete the arrangements for our departure as soon as they had secured the additional animal.

That afternoon, soon after the midday prayer, I was attacked by a violent fever, the first of its kind that

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I had ever experienced. I was sitting alone in my room, reading a book, when quite suddenly I felt extremely sick and feverish. I lay down and covered myself with my quilt and blanket, but within an hour I was on the verge of delirium. Abdurrahmân came into the room, followed by Abdul Fattâh, and I dimly understood them to be asking me about my sickness. I was obsessed, however, by the idea or delusion that in speech lay imminent danger. Therefore I restricted my replies to monosyllables. I must have been on the border-line between consciousness and delirium, as after the event I could never clearly recall what had happened, nor what I said. I was oppressed by intermittent harrowing obsessions and solacing visions. Sometimes I visualised, with a terrible intensity, the stony graveyard of El Maala, with its broken tombstones flung by the Wah-hâbîs into the grey sand and the dust of millions of departed hâjjis. Then I seemed to be in a room in a quiet and peaceful house. A soft breeze blew in at the open casement; while framed in that window was a beautiful picture of the spring-warmed countryside of Southern England. Lines of tall elm-tress were swaying in the wind, which blew across the green meadows at their feet—fluttering the gold and silver spangles which seemed to float in the hedged divisions of that green surface.

At other moments my present surroundings emerged clear-cut from the mists which obscured my understanding, and then I saw Abdurrahmân and his youth sitting cross-legged on the carpet beside me. It now seemed to me that their dusky faces were set in an expression of unusual gravity; but it was not the gravity of solicitude. At one moment I felt myself to be in full possession of my faculties, and I schemed with myself

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and mentally said "I must be cunning, and must speak little," for in my obsession I feared to say things which might incriminate me with these watching fanatics—incriminate me falsely, perhaps, but none the less disastrously. Then, in the next moment I was looking upon the yawning Maala: there it was again before my horrified eyes—that space of burning earth which receives the bodies of the Muslimîn, and causes them "to pass away into dust."

Again, the oppressive room in the mutawwif's house came into the field of my consciousness. I thought, if only I could climb to some mountain-top, and lie there among the winds which came out of Europe and Africa, I should be content to await my fate of life or death with tranquillity. Oh, the panting oppression of these close-packed crumbling houses!

Those two Mekkans sat watching me with a fatal stare. Now they uttered no further word, but sitting silently, they seemed to await, unmoved, my dissolution. After further moments, Abdurrahmân stretched out his hand, with a snake-like stealth and slowness, and took from the floor near my pillow the key of a small tin box which I had recently purchased in the market-place. He knew that therein, besides books, I kept my money. Now, surreptitiously bestowing the key in the fold of his waist-band, he resumed his silent vigil. I felt then like some wretch who, overcome by exhaustion in the waterless marches of the wilderness, lies down to die, while a pair of ghastly vultures descend and perch on the ground beside him. But how much better was such a fate than to be shut in among these suffocating walls! Soon, these ominous watchers would close the outer door of my room; and then with

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covetous eyes they would open my box and begin to examine its contents. That step taken, perhaps I might not live; even though my sickness was not of a fatal order. With a pang I realised that my pistol was in that same unlucky box, but a dagger which I had recently bought lay among some books in a niche or recess in the wall. This was scarcely more than a yard's distance from where I lay.

Still my companions sat silent; and it now seemed to my fever-disordered understanding that into the fixed expression of their watching eyes a new distrust and impatience had crept. I felt now that I lay in the direst captivity, manacled beyond hope of release. My companions, the friends of many months of fellowship, stood suddenly revealed as beings of an unknown and sinister world, between whom and me no sympathy could ever be. Yet there was a key which would unlock the hearts of my companions and bring them to my side—not with womanish pity, but with the sympathy of man to man in a supreme common aim. I knew that. I myself was in possession of that key, but I had lost the power to deliberately use it. I felt with peculiar certainty in that moment that, ultimately, in the world of men, a man must stand or fall alone. How long I lay pondering these matters I do not know, but I remember being clearly conscious at last that I could expect no succour from man. The horrible oppression of the closely-shuttered room in which I lay; the terror inspired by the thought of the maze of jealous Muhammadan walls stretching in every direction; the sight of the gloating purse-snatching ghouls at my bedside; the depression of spirit caused by hardships and fasting, combined to produce in my clouded mind the conviction that my last hour was rapidly approach-

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ing. I realised that in the world of men I was alone, and I repeated these words:—*

“God! There is no god save He. The Living; The Self-existing. Slumber overcometh Him not, nor sleep. Whatsoever existeth in the wide heavens and in the earth belongs to Him. Who is he that may intercede with Him, save by His gracious permission? He knoweth that which is in the present, and that which is past; but they comprehend no jot of His knowledge, save that which He wills. His Great Throne over-shadows the limitless heavens and the earth; nor can their preservation distress Him, for He is The High, The Tremendous.”

No sooner had I begun, than that look of strange earnestness instantly disappeared from the faces of my companions, giving place to an expression of eager delight. This, then, is the key to the locked door of the Muslim's heart. This is the passport to the innermost confines of the world of Islâm. I might at heart disagree with the Mekkans in some of their religious practices, but I worshipped the One God, as they did—The God whom Jews, Christians, and Muhammadans worship in common.† I had made my prayer with no

* This passage occurs in the Korân, near the end of Chapter *The Cow*, and is known as “The Throne Verse.” In its original Arabic it possesses a quality of sublime majesty which can scarcely be conveyed in a translation; though, in the above, I have departed from my general rule of literal translation in endeavouring to attain that end.

† Stripped of the divine, or semi-divine, honours which are frequently accorded to, vainly protesting, prophets and saints in the several systems, the religion is one.

Says Thomas à Kempis: “Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets; but rather do Thou speak, O Lord God, Inspirer and Enlightener of all the prophets: for Thou alone, without them, canst perfectly instruct me; but they without Thee can profit nothing.”

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hope or intention of softening my companions, but now they were my brothers and my servants. The sinister fact of my silence under affliction was now completely erased from their minds. They repeated the last great words of the Throne Verse with me, then:

"You are better, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Abdurrahmân, smiling. "You will come to health soon, if God wills."

Said Abdul Fattâh, leaning over and touching my hand, "God give you health! Why do you not drink tea, Hâjj Ahmad?"

"Although you break your fast, yet drink tea, Hâjj Ahmad!" urged Abdurrahmân. "You are ill, and Allah will condone it. . . . Will you drink?"

"I will drink, in shâ Allah," I replied.

"Up, O boy!" cried Abdurrahmân to the smiling youth. "Up, and make tea! And let you bring it quickly!"

Forthwith Abdul Fattâh arose and went upstairs in order to prepare the tea. Soon afterwards he brought it down to me.

My mind was beginning to wander again by that time, but shortly after drinking the tea I broke out into a profuse perspiration. This brought me complete relief for some time. As night approached, however, I again became consumed with a violent fever. I therefore sent Abdul Fattâh to the Sultân's doctor, with a note asking to be supplied with quinine. He did not come to see me, at which fact I was glad, as most of the Mekkans are suspicious of Turkish medical science, and themselves never consult anybody but a religious shaykh when they are ill. The shaykh gives them a written charm, prescribes certain religious exercises, and perhaps directs them to procure some primitive herb or drug from the perfume-sellers in the sùk.

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My former disquietude and caution now returned upon me. I felt that I was again passing from side to side of the border-line between consciousness and delirium, and again I was possessed with the haunting fear that I might speak some fatal word while not in possession of my mental powers. At the fall of night, therefore, when Abdurrahmân and Adbul Fattâh had retired to their part of the house, I cautiously rose and locked my door. Then, with that unquiet thought no longer disturbing me, I lay and talked to my shadow throughout the livelong night.

It seemed to me that I had become two persons who were closely in league one with the other. We two were engaged throughout the night in fighting some intangible enemy. We constantly spoke words of encouragement to one another during the conflict; but what it was we fought, and whether we fought with swords or schemes, I do not know. All was dim and unreal; but among the broken threads of thought, and speech, and imagined action, which crossed and recrossed one another in the woven experiences of that night, there was one shining strand which I constantly encountered with the utmost satisfaction. That was the fact that the door of the fortress which we defended was securely locked. In clearer moments I heard the monotonous plaintive crooning of a poor old woman and her little granddaughter in the ground floor of a house opposite. These two ground corn in a hand-mill for some of the neighbours, and thus earned a few meagre piastres.

At the break of dawn I felt that my brain, by an unperceived transition, had become calm and clear. The fever had completely left me, but I was as weak as a starving kitten. I had now lived the hard meagre

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life of the Arabs for many months, and for the last two weeks I had starved out the sunlight hours with my companions.

It was with difficulty that I arose, and with faltering footsteps reached the door of my room. This I unlocked. After a time Abdurrahmân came down, and enquired as to my state. He told me that he had hammered on the door at the hour of the sahûr in order to learn whether I intended to fast that day; as, if I would fast, then I must eat the sahûr meal. I decided that, as I was sick, I would avail myself of the Korânic dispensation until I grew stronger, and Abdurrahmân approved my decision. He then ostentatiously handed me the key of my box, saying that he had taken it for safe-keeping.

On each of the following three days I experienced a mild return of the fever at midday, lasting until sunset. Thereafter I was no more troubled with it; but my strength was very slow to return. The thought to go down to Jidda and leave Arabia crossed my mind, but I could not bring myself to relinquish the project of visiting El Medîna.

Mekka was now filling rapidly with pilgrims. Nearly every day ships arrived at Jidda, coming from the Malay Islands, India, Egypt, and elsewhere, carrying thousands of hâjjis. In my now languid state I used to enjoy sitting in the cloisters of the Haram to watch the motley throng performing the tawâf—swirling like the ceaseless eddy of a whirlpool round and round and round the Kaaba. Every hour some fresh party of white-clad pilgrims came flocking into the Great Mosque—for caravans were constantly arriving from Jidda, from El Medîna, from the Yemen, and from the East. The cloisters on every side were permanently

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crowded with a sitting multitude. The Matâf could scarcely contain the great thronging crowd which ceaselessly performed the tawâf.

Newly arrived pilgrims wore the ihrâm; while most of the others wore their ordinary clothes. A pilgrim who reaches the Haram limits some time before the Day of Pilgrimage usually assumes the ihrâm with the "intention of 'Omra." Having, on arrival at Mekka, completed that rite, he discards the ihrâm. On the eve of the Day of 'Arafa he puts on the pilgrim garb anew, with the "intention of Hajj." Some of the pilgrims, by mistake or from pious motives, put on the ihrâm for the Hajj even though they reach the Holy City several months before it is due to take place. In such a case the hâjji must continue to wear the ihrâm, day and night, until he has completed the Hajj. The sacrifice of a sheep as an alms to the poor, however, will extricate him from that uncomfortable predicament until the eve of 'Arafa.

Watching the circumambulating crowd one morning I observed, among the press, an Egyptian effendi. He was dressed in a "faultless" blue European suit. His shirt, collar, handkerchief and socks were all of the same lavender shade. Over his socks he wore a pair of patent-leather dancing pumps;* and his bright red tarbûsh was set upon his head at a rakish angle. As he moved round the House, he occasionally glanced in a bored manner at a gold wrist-watch which he wore.

Overtaking this strutting dandy there came a sturdy little Malay man, dressed in nothing but a

* Many of the old and tender-footed Muslims wear slippers in the Mosque. For this purpose they keep a special pair of footwear, which they carry with them from their houses and put on before crossing the threshold of the Mosque.

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sarong, and naked from the waist upwards. A tiny brown infant was tied on his bare back by means of another sarong, which acted as a sling, being passed over one of the man's shoulders and under the other. In his left hand he led another child—a wonder-eyed little girl some seven years of age. A woman, slight as a child, closely wrapped in the white sheet of the female *hâjji*, padded along close behind the Malay's right shoulder. Doubtless she was his wife. As this family group ranged, with hurrying strides, alongside the Egyptian, the little girl stumbled and fell, but not to the ground, for the Egyptian instantly bent down and grasped her firmly beneath the arms. Then, lifting her quite off her feet, he set her down again safely on the marble pavement. All this happened without any pause in the onward progress of the *hâjjis*, and without any commotion the Malay family and the Egyptian proceeded with their *tawâf*. The *effendi* smiled in a bored fashion to the Malay father; and the latter reciprocated with a bashful grin. They had no language in common. The shrouded Malay woman adjusted the little girl's coloured dress; the *effendi* glanced at his wrist-watch, and round they went towards the Black Stone. Yet these two unlike beings, after a few days, would pass on to 'Arafa, in appearance indistinguishable the one from the other, being clothed in the simple austerity of the *ihrâm*—even as they had entered Mekka a while before.

A very divine ordinance is this: that every man shall go, once in his lifetime, into the Presence of God at His appointed place, clad in such wise as to symbolise the fact that in His sight all men are alike, whatever their worldly stations may be. Said the Prophet "No Muslim can be better than another save by piety."

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A party of Tartars, closely packed together like a flock of huge shaggy sheep, went by at the heels of their mutawwif, trying hard to repeat after him the words of the supplication. Their responses, however, were mere unintelligible grunts.

Many of the Malay women will not abandon their love of brilliantly coloured dress, even when clothed in the ihrâm. Instead of the plain white shroud, some of them wear a coloured one. I have seen pink, cerise, brown, fawn, and pale blue ihrâms; and others of a flowery wall-paper pattern. A woman wears her ordinary clothes underneath the pilgrim dress; and in Mekka all women, save only the most abjectly poor, wear stockings. The only classes of women whom I have seen bare-footed in Mekka are Bedouin women and Africans.

Numbers of the better-class women who happen to lodge at a distance from the Mosque hire two-wheeled carts to carry them to and fro whenever they desire to visit the Haram. These carts are primitive wooden boxes on wheels, without springs. They are made with shutters, which can be opened or closed according as the ladies desire to remain veiled, or to uncover their faces, during the ride. They are drawn by horses, mules, or donkeys, indifferently.

The Mekkans are now busy to earn money of the hâjjis. Every shop in the market-place is open. Numbers of Syrian, Egyptian, and Indian merchants make the journey to Mekka every year at the season of the Pilgrimage. These bring merchandise with them, and renting a shop in the sùk they there display their goods to the sauntering hâjjis.

Every ihrâm-clad man who enters the Haram without a guide is accosted by mutawwifs. If he be so

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destitute as to be unable to pay for guidance, then a mutawwif will conduct him in the tawâf and "running" without reward. Such an act is rarely done out of kindness. It is done in order to sustain the delusion that rites performed without the guidance of a mutawwif are valueless in the sight of Allah—for such is the impious contention advanced by the fraternity of guides for their own financial advantage. It is true that few new-comers can possibly be so familiar with Mekka, by hearsay or reading, as to be capable of performing the rites correctly by themselves, without making certain enquiries. Even learned Muhammadans employ mutawwifs on their first visit to the Holy City. But in Islamic teaching a pious intention is worth more in the sight of God than meticulous precision in performing acts of worship. That fact, however, has long since become obscured throughout the Muslim world. In the matter of providing lodgings, the mutawwifs are indispensable to the hâjjis; and that is the sole necessity which brought such a class into being.

Shafîg, whose hâjjis had not yet reached Mekka, would turn an honest penny while awaiting their arrival. Therefore he set up an enormous water-jar at the end of our lane, and borrowing ablution jars from the houses of Abdurrahmân, Sabri and other dwellers in our quarter, he distributed jars of water to the hâjjis who desired to perform their ablutions. He gave the water, he said, for the sake of the blessing (i.e. for the spiritual reward of doing a good deed). What he really meant was that he preferred to leave the amount of his recompense to the hâjjis' generosity or ignorance. If a Bedouin would know the price before washing (the Bedouin come to town displays the caution of the English country yokel in a similar situation), then

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Shafîg would tell him plainly that it was a farthing. Briskly Shafîg handed out the jars of water before the hours of prayer, for his stance was adjacent to the lane which led to the 'Omra Gate of the Great Mosque, and many were the hâjjis who flocked by that way to perform their devotions. The adân ended, the fasting man would return quickly to his house with a cheerful face, and hand the new-gained money to his wife. Then, putting on his short jacket or his jubba, he went to the Mosque to join the congregation.

Towards the end of Ramadhân, I became acquainted with one Sayyid Abdul Fattâh, who was employed in the Law Court. This man possessed a house near the Bâb el Gutbi, and thither he invited me. In the hot noondays we would descend to an underground room beneath his house, and there on a spread carpet we sat to talk. The atmosphere in this cellar was many degrees cooler than in the rooms above, although an oil-lamp burnt there.

One day the Sayyid told me that there was an Englishman living in El Medîna five years before, for he himself had seen him. He was an old man, with a white beard reaching to his waist, and his skin was white. He spoke little Arabic, nor understood any other language known in El Medîna. He communicated with his neighbours largely by means of gestures. It was this old man's greatest delight to sit on in the Prophet's Mosque after prayers, and listen to some skilful chanter of the Korân. He was supposed to have come from India, and was known as Abdulla el Muslimâni. I thought this might be some half-caste Eurasian Muhammadan, but his title of El Muslimâni indicated that he was a convert to the Islamic faith, and not a Muslim born. I determined to make some

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discreet enquiry concerning him when, in the course of my travels, I should be come to El Medîna.

The fast of Ramadhân coming to its famished end, several members of our coterie prepared feasts in their houses. These entertainments of the mutawwifs among themselves are of a very informal character. No pious exercises are indulged in, as is done among the more religious orders.

I took the opportunity of the advent of the Feast of Fast-breaking to invite our cronies to dinner. They were all delighted to come, and turned up *en masse* soon after sunrise, in order to assist in preparing the viands. Abdurrahmân opened one of the musty old rooms on a lower floor of the house, and there the preparations were made. Minced meat was made by scraping the joints with knives; and from the resulting pulp our genial helpers kneaded meat-balls, which they impaled in lines on long skewers. Vegetables were cut up, salads compounded, and kunâfa prepared. The last is a sweetmeat, compounded of vermicelli and sugar.

The adân for midday prayers sounded before we had finished these preparations, but nobody displayed the least inclination to go to prayers, until Uncle Yûsef, having mauled his final meat-ball, cried, "Up, O boys! Forget not prayer, if you would not lose the blessing of the occasion!"

After prayers we returned to our mutton. Abdurrahmân had sent his women up to the roof, so as to leave the kitchen untenanted. Sabri was, by his own account, the best cook in Mekka, and, accordingly, he and Abdurrahmân went upstairs to attend to the cooking. The other guests, forming a human chain, passed the raw material from hand to hand up the stairs.

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By and by they brought down to my room great steaming dishes of boiled rice, smoking skewers of meat-balls, dishes of vegetables in gravy, and plates of salad, together with the kunâfa and a pile of bread discs. Having eaten this mass of provender, we sat back against the cushions, and began to discuss the all-important topic of the forthcoming Hajj. Presently the company joyously concentrated on that department of the subject which treats of unearned increment.

Said Sabri: "We were in El Medîna one year, I and my father—God show him mercy!—and it was only two weeks before the Hajj. We had three piastres between us—As I tell you, O Gathering! . . . three piastres, wallah! and with that we had to reach Mekka. It behoved us to travel without delay, lest the Hajj pass on us before we could arrive. After much trouble, my father found a Bedouin of his acquaintance, and he promised to mount us on baggage camels in his caravan, and we would pay him the money in Mekka. Good! . . . We reached Râbigh, and were starving. I went over to the large shop which is just below the Fort, in order to get a little flour for a piastre. When I entered I saw two Shâmîs, and they were buying eatables with money . . . I say with money, O boys! . . . They had arrived in a caravan before us. I was looking over the fish—the fish in Râbigh is sweet like sugar, O Gathering!—when I heard one of the Shâmîs tell Mabrûk, the owner of the shop, that he was from Homs. So I said to the Shâmîs, 'Peace be upon you, O hâjjis! Are you from Homs?' "

"White upon you!" cried Hasan, and the company laughed uproariously. As their mirth subsided, Sabri rearranged his crossed legs and proceeded.

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“‘And upon you be peace,’ said the two hâjjis, ‘Why do you ask this?’”

“I said to them, ‘I ask it because my father is the mutawwif for all the hâjjis of Homs, and . . .’”

At that the full-fed merry company roared with laughter, and each flung his joke or his taunt at the smiling Sabri. He for his part looked more like Henry VIII than ever, as he sat swelling with suppressed delight, and endeavouring to frown upon the company.

“O dog!” laughed Shafîg, “I will tell Ez-Zâwî.”

“And Ez-Zâwî will slay thee,” cried Hasan.

“Good! And after that . . .?” queried Abdesh-Shukûr.

“I said to them,” proceeded Sabri, “‘My father, O brothers, is the mutawwif for all the hâjjis of Homs, and we heard that there were two hâjjis coming with this caravan which you came with, and so my father said to me, ‘Search among the hâjjis for our brethren from Homs, O my son!’ So I searched, O Effendis! And, praise be to Allah, I have found you.’ Thus I said to them, O Gathering! and, wallah, they were from Homs. See the grace of Allah! And we were near unto death!”

“Then they said to me,” continued Sabri, “‘Our mutawwif is Mahmûd Ez-Zâwî.’ So I said to them, ‘That is the name of my father. He is sitting over there in the coffee-house. Will you honour us by drinking a finjân of coffee?’”

Again the cronies shrieked with laughter, and Sabri was obliged to pause. At last he was able to continue.

“Listen, O Gathering!” said he. “They came and saluted my father, and drank coffee. When they had finished the coffee, they said, ‘We are in that caravan, and we start before sunset. We will ask for you in Mekka, if Allah wills.’”

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"But my father said to them, 'We are responsible for you, and we are here to serve you, O hâjjis! It is our work to see that the hâjjis are comfortable and relieved of all distress, if it be the will of Allah. We will cook for you, and do all things necessary.' "

"That is, you spoke to them according to the custom of the mutawwifs," said Uncle Yûsef, removing the mouthpiece of his shîsha from his lips for a moment.

All laughed heartily at that, and, "White upon you, Amm Yûsef!" cried Hasan.

"And," proceeded Sabri, "my father went to the Bedouin leader of their caravan and told him that he was responsible for the two hâjjis, and that it behoved him to take their two camels and tie them behind our caravan. This we did, and so we took charge of their baggage. We found samn, and flour, and rice, and vegetables, and tea, and coffee, and sugar, and this and that. We just asked them for a mejîdi on account, in order to buy oil; and there we were—completely supplied. Provision from Allah!"

"But did not Ez-Zâwi claim his hâjjis when you reached Mekka?" asked Abdurrahmân. He and Shafîg, mutawwifs both, had joined in the general mirth with less than the general enthusiasm. Sabri was not a mutawwif but a Zemzemi, and had no right to take upon himself the conduct of hâjjis.

"Listen!" said Sabri. "When we reached Mekka we took them to our house; but Ez-Zâwi saw them in the Haram, and he claimed them. He came to our house, and said he would take us before Sayyidna for hâjji-stealing. So what could we do? We gave them up to him, but they gave us a little money on account of the guesting we had given them."

Then the mutawwifs began to speak about their

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agents at Jidda. These agents meet the hâjjis as they come from the quarantine station, and arrange for their transportation to Mekka.

"It is getting hot in Jidda now," said Abdurrahmân. "In another month it will be like Jehannam."

"It is horrid in Jidda when the wind blows," said Hasan.

Said Yûsef, "There is no place so heavy on my heart as Jidda."

"Do you not like Jidda, Amm Yûsef?" I asked.

"I like it not at all," said he. "It is always filthy and full of bugs and lice, and in the time of the Hajj one may scarcely breathe there. Also it is narrow and confined, like a prison."

Presently, the talk turning to foreign matters, one named Abu Daud, a teacher in the Korân-school to which Shafîg sent his little son, told the company that he had heard but that morning from one arrived from Basra, that the Turks under Mustafa Kemâl had taken Mosul and Bagdad and were marching triumphantly on Basra. "Further," said he, "when the Turks have occupied El 'Irâk, it is their intention to take Damascus, and then to join hands with the Egyptians in order to crush the Wahnâbîs."

Such wild reports as this are rumoured every day among them.

At last the day of my leaving Mekka arrived. Abdurrahmân had arranged for me to travel to El Medîna with a party of Egyptian pilgrims. I was to occupy a shugduf with the leader of the party, one named Shaykh Imbârah. My provision—of bread, toasted hard like biscuit, rice, lentils, dates, goat-milk cheese, olives, tea and sugar—was all procured and packed in a small sack and two baskets. Abdul Fattâh had taken

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my water-skin to the patcher to be repaired, and now it hung, full and sweating, from a nail outside my door.

Since my illness I had taken a secret dislike to the fat smiling mutawwif. Nevertheless, he had served me well in all the long months of my sojourn in the ancient city. It had been his custom to inform me when he thought the time had come for me to give him money. Whenever I delayed to do so, he would say simply "I want money to-day, Hâjj Ahmad." I had given him ten pounds after the Hajj, and had subsequently added to this sums which represented six guineas for each month of my stay. Now I gave him another five pounds.

In the presence of their hâjjis the mutawwifs often speak of the sums of money which their pilgrims in former years have given them. It may be, one will say, "You remember Fulân Bey who was with me in the past year, brother?"

"Ay, yes!" says he to whom this question is addressed. "He wore a white jubba, and sat every night in the Haram after the 'eshâ prayer reading the Korân."

"He!" cries the other. "God bless thee! It is he! . . . Good! When he was about to return to his own country after the Hajj, he gave me fifty guineas, brother. Wallah, O Gathering, fifty guineas!" and looking keenly but covertly at the faces of the hâjjis who sit before him, he will be impelled by their lack of enthusiasm, or exalted by their smiles of congratulation, to add "and his wife gave me twenty guineas."

"And this is but thy right," I would say, when Shafîg, or Yûsef, or another of our cronies was the speaker, "for living always here about the Kaaba, ye have become the neighbours of Allah," and I would repeat

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the last line of the Chapter entitled *Curaysh*—"Let them then serve the Lord of this House, Who giveth them food against hunger, and protecteth them from fear." They themselves were never tired of quoting a verse from Chapter *Ibrâhîm*. It narrates the story of Abraham making his supplication to God—

"O Lord, verily I have caused some of my descendants to dwell in a barren valley, near Thy sanctified House, that they may continually raise up prayer. Cause Thou, therefore, some of the hearts of men to turn towards them with kindness, and bestow Thou provision of fruits upon them, that they may give thanks."

Were it not for the mutawwifs, the Pilgrimage could hardly be maintained from year to year, save only by the Arabs themselves, and by such dervishes as take pleasure in submitting themselves to extreme hardships. After the days of the Hajj, the Mekkans remain in their hot valley, keeping their houses in repair, arranging for supplies of food, and taking measures to ensure a proper supply of water for the next pilgrimage. They have no means of earning a living but by serving the hâjjis.

A bad trait in my companions was their indignation, which was obvious though suppressed, that anyone should give money to poor Malays and other sojourners in Mekka. The lot of these wretched people in the time of war was a hard one, for their remittances from their own countries, which were formerly sent by post or by the hands of new pilgrims, no longer reached them. The Mekkans considered that all bounty dispensed in their city was due to themselves alone, by divine right.

In normal circumstances, Abdurrahmân was a man of courtesy, affability, restraint and average good

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sense; and in Mekka I might, had Providence not willed otherwise, have found myself among a far more unpleasant and dangerous crew. He had long since heard from one employed in the Hamîdîya that I was an Englishman; and upon his enquiring pointedly as to my nationality, I told him that it was so. His only comment was to give praise to Allah Who had guided me. I never suffered the least inquisition at any time in Mekka. I had regarded my journey so seriously from the moment I had begun to plan it, and had entered so thoroughly into the spirit of the life I was now living, that to all outward appearances I might have been a lifelong zealous Muslim. This mental adaptation was made all the more easy, not to say inevitable, by reason of the appeal of rightness which the simple architecture of the old mosques, the complete reverence of the Muslim form of worship, and the concentration of the worshippers in what they were about, addressed to me. Above all this, there was the supreme fact that I was a bigoted believer in the doctrine of the towhid.*

Having eaten at midday, I descended with Abdurrahmân to the Haram an hour before el 'asr. My host's shrouded wife and his slave-woman came down and held out their covered hands for me to grasp in farewell. Abd esh-Shukûr, assisted by his son and a porter, carried down my baggage. This they would take to the open space, known as Shaykh Mahmûd, at the western extremity of the Jarwal—for there the El Medîna caravans assemble.

Having performed the Towâf of Farewell, I left the Haram by the Bâb el Widâ' and proceeded, accompanied by Abdurrahmân, to Shaykh Mahmûd. Arrived

* Et-towhid is the doctrine of the Unity of God: literally, the act of unifying or declaring to be one.

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there, my companion introduced me to a portly grey-bearded Egyptian who was seated on a bench before a coffee-house. This was my *rafîg*, Shaykh Imbârak. With a word of greeting, I seated myself beside him to await events.

The plain in front of us was encumbered with a great restless press of groaning camels, yelling Bedouins, officious Mekkans, and sheepish *hâjjis*. Most of the camels had *shugdufs* mounted upon their saddles, and into these the *hâjjis* were mounting. Some of them placed a foot on the camel's neck, and climbed in over its withers. Others made use of a short ladder for the purpose of mounting. Frequently, unskilful pilgrims fell into the *shugdufs* too quickly, with the result that the whole contrivance overbalanced, so that the animal had to be again couched in order that its saddle might be re-adjusted. Confusion prevailed on all sides.

I had sat with the old shaykh watching this scene for half-an-hour, when Abdurrahmân beckoned to us from a distance. We rose, and collecting our light baggage, went to the spot where he waited with Abd esh-Shukûr. Our camel was ready, and forthwith we mounted into the *shugduf*. Another camel was tied behind ours, and others behind that, in a long chain. The *mutawwif* of my Egyptian companion handed up to us a jar of Zemzem water, bidding us drink. At last one of the Bedouin camel-drivers began to lead our animal slowly forward.

Abdurrahmân, Abd esh-Shukûr, and Abdul Fattâh ran alongside my camel, and each in turn, holding by the front of the *shugduf* with his left hand, held up his right in order to grasp mine.

"With safety!" they said, giving me friendly smiles. "God show me thy face in safety again!"

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"In the keeping of God!" I replied. "God bless you. Peace be upon you."

"And upon you be peace, and the mercy of God, and His blessings," they replied.

The camels paced on further, and they dropped behind. That was the last I saw of them. And so, not without a pang, I passed from the strangest of all the cities of the world.

XXVIII

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OUR slow train of camels passed on down the broad sandy way which leads westward from Shaykh Mahmûd. Close at our right hand was the long wall of 'Aun er-Rafîg's orchard. Half a mile distant from Shaykh Mahmûd, a low chain of hills, extending from the southward, approaches the mountain of Abi Lahab at the foot of which lies the walled orchard. Through a narrow gap between the two hills the track led westward.

Slowly our camels passed through the cleft, bringing us into the presence of the wide prospect beyond. In front of us a steep declivity descended into the plain of The Martyrs. Before we began to descend this, I looked back through the open shugduf for a last view of the straggling grey houses of the Jarwal, gilded now by the setting sun. Further back lay the slope of Jebel Hindi, crowned with the tall houses of the mutawwifs. In another moment we had descended into the plain, and looking back once more, I could no longer see any sign of the Holy City except a few rush huts perched upon the stony hill-top immediately above me.

The plain of The Martyrs stretched before us, with the great well, Bîr el Bint, lying nearly half-way between its eastern and its western limits. The plain was silent and deserted but for the long lines of laden camels which paced westward under the foot-hills of its northern side. No trace now remained of the great host of

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Wahhâbîs who had made this place their camping-ground during the long months of the Hijâz war.

Coming to the western hills, we stumbled up a rocky slope at the top of which were a few old ramshackle coffee-houses. Here the caravans were halted, in order that the officers of the Government might inspect the receipts for duty paid in Mekka on every camel leaving the Holy City. The dues amounted to somewhat more than four pounds sterling on every camel bearing a shugduf, bound for El Medîna. The owner of the animal received a further four pounds for its hire, making the total expense eight pounds, or four pounds to be paid by each pilgrim. In addition to this it is the custom for passengers to supply a certain amount of food to the drivers of their camels during the ten days' journey, and to give them a small present of money on its conclusion.

An hour and a half after leaving Shaykh Mahmûd we came to El 'Omra. Here the hâjjis dismounted in order to pray the sunset prayer within the limits of the Haram for the last time. After the formal prayers, they raised their hands palms upward before them, and made supplication to God for a "safe journey to the City of His Prophet, and a speedy return to His Holy House." From this elevated ground some of the houses of Mekka are said to be visible, but I could distinguish no sign of them as I stood peering into the falling dusk. Some of my Egyptian companions addressed the City, exclaiming, "O City of Allah! O best of the Cities of the Earth! May Allah return us to thee in safety!" It was well for them that no passing Wahhâbî zealot chanced to hear them thus rendering a sort of homage to other than God.

Proceeding further, through valleys which wound

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among chains of low hills, we came at the hour of el 'eshâ to Sayyida Maymûna. This place is named after one of the Prophet's wives who is said to lie buried here. A small mosque at the left-hand side of the way marks the place of the tomb. A dome which surmounted the latter had been recently destroyed by the Wahnâbîs.

Having full water-skins from Mekka, we passed by this place without stopping. The air of the April night was cool, and riding in a north-westerly direction we frequently felt the fresh breeze blowing in our faces as we came to turns in the hill-walled valley. I drew in great breaths of the pure air, and it seemed to me, after being so long submerged in the stagnant atmosphere of the Mekkan valley, as though I were drinking cool draughts of some delicious spring. Behind us the moon of the eleventh night of Shawâl climbed slowly higher in the glittering sky.

Shaykh Imbârak sat cross-legged in his side of the shugduf, repeatedly telling his beads to the words, "O God, send blessings upon our Lord Muhammad, and upon his family and his companions, and give them peace!" Presently I fell into a state of somnolence.

Some two hours before dawn we halted, and looking ahead I saw dimly a far-stretching narrow belt of palm-trees extending across our line of march. In the clear starlight I could see that the ground under these palm-trees was black with cultivation. This was the fertile debouchure of the Wâdi Fâtma. The creaking of well-tackle and the hiss of pouring water came intermittently out of the gloom. The hills through which we had been travelling since leaving the plain of The Martyrs had now receded to right and left, leaving before us a broad sandy bottom in which lay the oasis.

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We couched our camels in the sand, and untying the ropes, we lifted the shugdufs in turn from the animals' backs—four men to each shugduf—and bore them to a little distance, where they remained standing upright on their struts, like small tents or covered beds raised two feet from the ground.

Shaykh Imbârak and I, assisted by two of his Egyptian fellow-travellers, had just settled our shugduf in position when we heard angry curses mixed with the sound of "kh-kh-kh" rapidly repeated. Turning, we saw our camel-driver, Hasan, holding on to the end of a rope which was attached to the halter of a young half-broken she-camel which the leader of the caravan had purchased in Mekka. Hasan, holding the end of the rope, was some six or eight feet away from the animal's head. He made no attempt to shorten that distance and thus regain control, but ran along with the bolting camel, excitedly cursing its father and mother. The frightened animal quickly gathered speed and disappeared into the darkness northward, dragging Hasan along somewhere in the region of its tail. On the back of that beast were my saddle-bags. The animal carried no load, and the bags had been flung over its hump. Doubtless, I reflected, they would soon be flung off, and how then might I expect to see them again?

Hasan returned at sunrise. He had been obliged to let go his hold on the halter almost as soon as the animal bolted, and since then he had been vainly searching for camel and saddle-bags.

Spreading our carpets on the sand, we seated ourselves and prepared to break our fast. I had some cheese, olives, and dates in the shugduf, and Shaykh Imbârak supplied me with bread and a cup of coffee.

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My bread and other articles of food were in my vanished saddle-bags.

The good shaykh would obey the Prophet's injunction to do good works while on pilgrimage. Every begging African or destitute dervish who approached with outstretched gourd or hand received a morsel of Shaykh Imbârak's breakfast.

Hasan, having eaten, went to seek Husayn, who was the mukowwim, or leader, of our caravan. Soon they were seen coming towards us—Hasan, Husayn, and the latter's chief assistant, one Atîya.

Gravely Husayn gave us the word of peace, which we returned again, inviting him to be seated. Drawing his abaya together, he dropped cross-legged on our carpet, followed by Atîya and Hasan.

Although a small and slight man, Husayn wore a becoming air of great dignity. His beard was white, but his dark eyes were sharp and shrewd. Slowly he drew his tobacco-bag from the pocket of his thawb and began to fill the little clay bowl of his pipe. The stem of this pipe was nearly two feet in length, and was made from an unpared cherry-stick fitted with a mouth-piece of amber. Shaykh Imbârak poured out coffee to the company.

"How found you the night's journey?" asked Husayn. "Restful, in shâ Allah."

We assured him that we had travelled comfortably.

Having given praise to God on that assurance, he enquired of Hasan concerning the direction taken by the runaway nâga; and then, turning to me, he enquired, "And as to thy saddle-bags. Is there money in them? What is their value?"

"There is no money in them," I assured him. "But in them are valuable books and clothes, and my pro-

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vision of food." My money, note-books, camera and pistol I invariably carried about my person when on a journey.

"Good!" said he. "We will return them to you, in shâ Allah. They have not vanished. We will search for them."

He then spoke a few words in an undertone to Atîya, and forthwith the latter arose and left us.

After this conference I wandered away in order to explore the oasis. A few yards from the place of our encampment a stream of flowing water wound among green fields of birsîm. Beside its banks grew henna-bushes, and the tall columns of palm-trees rose at intervals out of the meadows. In several of the fields young grain and vegetables were growing, but at this season of the year the predominating crop was birsîm. Many wells were scattered about on the outskirts of the cultivation, and the water from a number of springs, being led into stone-lined channels, supplied a continuous stream. This oasis is generally referred to by the Arabs as El Wâdi.

Hundreds of Malays, whose caravans were encamped on the plain, were squatting along the banks of the rivulet busily bathing themselves in its waters. Coming from a country of tropical rains and great rivers, the Malays bear the Arabian lack of water less easily than the pilgrims of any other race. Newly arrived at the Wâdi, they flocked in hundreds to the banks of the stream, and throwing off all their clothes save the sarong, they dashed the cool water over themselves with their cupped hands or by means of tin cans. Many of the women threw off their clothes likewise, and, bare-breasted, enjoyed the luxury of a bath. The children splashed and gurgled in delight as their mothers poured water over their naked brown bodies.

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I saw a number of Indians bathing also, but the Arabs and my Egyptian companions preferred to sit at coffee and cigarettes. When I rejoined Shaykh Imbârak in our encampment, he said "Look how the women of the Javans walk with uncovered faces, and bathe naked before the men! Their customs are beast-like, wallah!"

"Thus they are wont to do every day in their own country," I said. "They cannot support the lack of water. But I have seen Egyptian women bathing on the banks of the Nile as naked as these Malays."

"Ay, yes! But they cover their faces when a man approaches," replied he. "Not so, O Fâtma?"

A woman had approached—one whom I had not particularly noticed until now, though I knew that several women were travelling with my Egyptian companions. She was clearing away the remains of the shaykh's breakfast. "Ay, yes, sir!" she replied mildly to the old man's question, "Egyptian women walk not uncovered before men."

Nevertheless, my companions spoke their comments more in sorrow than in disgust. The Malays, splashing like ducks in the water, were so transparently happy and child-like that the Egyptians only deplored the lack of instruction which permitted such debased customs as that of women bathing before men to continue. Such seemed to be the tolerant view of my companions. Heaven knows what would have happened had Ibn Saûd allowed the Wahhâbîs the freedom of the pilgrim road!

When Hasan the camel-driver told us of the preposterous prices which Malays would pay for a girba of water "to wash themselves with, O Gathering!", and that many of them insisted on bathing from head

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to foot every day of their journey on this road, they marvelled greatly that such people could be found who would give so much good money for water, when Allah allowed the ordained ablutions to be performed with sand instead of water in the desert.

As they finished bathing and washing their clothes, each Malay family, clad in clean garments, returned to their camping-place. The father, leading his little child by the hand, walked with the confident air of one who is pleased with himself. Walking a pace behind them, came his wife, adjusting and re-adjusting her brightly-coloured head-veil, and glancing about her with a child-like air of half-shy superiority or of timorous coquetry.

The Malay is a race which typifies a lazy bourgeoisie. It is difficult to believe that this nation produced very good pirates less than a century ago. Under British and Dutch rule the Malays have lapsed into childhood. This fact, though perhaps somewhat contemptible in the view of an observer, is not regarded as unattractive either by the people themselves or by their suzerains.

As the sun mounted higher, I became consumed with a sudden violent fever. I swallowed quinine pills, and lay in the shugduf, covered with my blanket. Presently I was attacked by vomiting. "Be not uneasy," said Shaykh Imbârak, "to be sick is good." I felt that I was exceedingly weak and faint, but out here on the open plain I suffered no depression of spirit such as had affected me in Mekka. A hot wind blew across the oasis, and the sun whitened all about us with clear light. I felt as care-free as though I lay in a nurse-tended bed in England. I felt that here in these open places nothing could hinder the beneficent

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work of Nature. I said to my companion: "Of your favour, send for some milk, if there is any milk found here."

"Good!" replied the old man. But he made no movement—only continued to sit cross-legged opposite to me in his side of the shugduf. He was smoking an Egyptian cigarette in a long bone tube. He was obviously thinking hard. I lay and watched him dreamily for at least ten minutes. At the end of that time he slowly unfastened a basket which he had with him, and carefully and deliberately took therefrom a glass scent bottle containing a small quantity of colourless liquid. He then extracted from the basket a great loaf of sugar from which he hammered two small pieces, with the aid of a massive jack-knife and a large stone picked up from the ground. Removing the stopper of the scent-bottle, he next poured careful drops of the colourless liquid on the two pieces of sugar. Then replacing the stopper in the bottle, and the bottle in the basket, he handed the saturated sugar to me without saying a word. I took the medicine, saying "bismillah," and smelt it. The liquid was essence of peppermint. Having swallowed the medicine, I felt considerably better, though still feverish. The old man then sent one of his companions to endeavour to procure some milk. He presently returned with a small quantity, which upon being boiled assumed a yellow complexion and deposited hard lumps in the bottom of the vessel. Leaving the milk to dry up or otherwise eliminate itself, I asked the Egyptian to buy me some eggs. In this he was successful, and I spent the rest of the afternoon in absorbing raw egg with alternate draughts of water. By the time we moved off, at el 'asr, I felt much better; and the motion of the camel,

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causing a constant current of air about me, added to my improvement. By nightfall the fever had subsided completely, or become very slight.

Our way lay across a scrub-covered plain, bordered by hills on either side. Now, as I lay in the swaying shugduf, a violent wind arose, tearing across the valley from the eastward. As the night darkened, rain began to fall, and the wind increased in fury. The Arabs halted their camels, which were shivering forlornly in the cold wind and rain.

That was a strange storm—unlit by lightning, and with no noise of thunder.

A tropic storm is generally a thing of ink-black clouds slowly creeping up the sky, their lower surges illuminated a ruddy bronze, while no stir of wind breaks the expectancy. Then, while Nature waits in tense silence, a jagged spear of fire pulses across the cloud-bank; imminence becomes a tangible thing, and bearing down upon the cowering breathless earth, it sends its voice in deafening thunder crashing across the world. In a moment the wind rises, not accelerating by stages, but instantly at gale speed. It bends the swaying palm-trees like hard-drawn bows, and all their dead fronds, which have hung lifeless for months, come swishing down to earth—as it were the feathered ends of huge arrows, broken off. In a moment more the world is deluged with torrents of rain, through which the continuous thunder cracks and reverberates and the lightning flashes ceaselessly.

Now, in this desert storm, thunder and lightning were absent, but the wind increased to hurricane speed, violently driving sheets of rain upon us, and wetting everything in the frail shugdufs. The litter which I occupied was on the side from which the wind

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was blowing, and I felt it tilting upward to a dangerous angle. I shifted my weight to the outer edge in order to bring the contrivance into equilibrium, and the old shaykh climbed partly on the camel's hump between us. These precautions kept our shugduf from overturning. Several litters were indeed tilted right over by the wind, and the camels which bore them were thrown down.

The miserable animals now began to couch of their own accord, with the hâjjis still in the shugdufs. Then dropping with bare feet on to the water-sodden ground we removed the litters from the backs of our beasts. This having been successfully accomplished, each man covered himself as best he could with his wet blanket, and prepared to pass the night in his shugduf. Hasan the camel-driver crawled beneath Shaykh Imbârak's litter for shelter. All this while the wind continued to blow with terrific violence, and the rain fell in torrents. Having settled myself in my wet litter, I fell asleep immediately, and awoke to find the sun shining over the eastern horizon. I had had an excellent night's rest, and, though weak, I felt well.

Bright and warm was the early sunshine over the damp wilderness. I had no food of a sort which I felt inclined to eat, since I had lost my saddle-bags. I was therefore reduced to waiting like a dervish until somebody offered me a crust of bread and a finjân of tea "for Allah's sake." My companions were not lacking in Muhammadan hospitality, in so far as their poor provision allowed, and I did not go hungry.

The camels having been collected and loaded, we mounted and marched forward in the strong morning sunshine. Signs of last night's storm were visible on every hand, in the clean washed appearance of the

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ground, and in the many tiny watercourses which wound their ways from the edges of the valley to its centre. No standing water remained anywhere on the face of the desert; all had been absorbed by that thirsty soil, but the whole of the far-stretching wilderness was shining with a new freshness.

As we advanced, the granite hills which bordered the plain continued to recede on either hand. The plain itself was a level expanse of sand, sparsely clothed with camel-grass, thorn-bushes, and a few acacia trees. Our group of camels formed a single link in a long broken chain of caravans which extended before and behind us, almost as far as the eye could see. Most of the pilgrims who travelled with us were Malays, but a number of Egyptians, Indians, Turks, and Bokhārāns were included among them. The Malays were like children on a holiday. Flags of many colours—red, green, blue, and yellow—were stuck into the tops of their shugdufs. As they journeyed onward, they ate water-melon and dates, and murmured their childish thoughts to one another in their soft Italian-like language. As sunset approached, they put on sarongs and bajus* of bright colours, and springing down to the ground, they walked along beside their camels joking gently together, or indulging in kitten-play, or trying to carry on a conversation with the Arabs. Wherever several of them walked together they went in single file, from force of habit, as they are constrained to do in the narrow trails which penetrate their native jungles. Compared with the hard-living self-careless Arabs, they seemed in all that they did to be veritable little hedonists. They are naturally selfish, and human

* The baju is a loose blouse, resembling a surplice cut off short at the waist.

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charity finds little place in their character. Coming to the evening encampment, they proceed to prepare their meal of boiled rice and the stinking "ikan kring"* which they love. They do not mix melted butter with their rice, for such is not the custom in their country. Now, having eaten their fill, they will offer the remainder of their dry rice to the Arab camel-drivers, and thereby satisfy their primitive consciences that they have discharged the obligation of hospitality. The Arabs will not touch butterless rice, unless in great extremity of hunger.

Far different was the case among my Egyptian companions. They were only poor fellahîn, but the Semitic humanity was in them. In their veins there still flowed the blood of that race which stands pre-eminent among the nations of the world for deeds of fantastic self-abnegation—the race which gave to the world, in Hâtim of the Tribe of Tayy, its greatest example of the quixotically generous. Regularly, Shaykh Imbârak ladled out a liberal portion of his rice and lentils seasoned with samn, and a piece of his meat if he had any, to Hasan the camel-driver. His poorer companions too, one of whom was so destitute of worldly goods that he was constrained to borrow of the good shaykh the money to pay for a sacrificial sheep with which to discharge a ritualistic penalty which he had incurred, never failed to call out to Hasan at meal-times, bidding him to "do them the favour." The Arabs who attended upon some of the Malay caravans made a practice of frequenting our manzil,† in the hope of receiving a morsel of food.

* Ikan kring (Malay)—dried fish. They bring stores of this viand with them from their islands.

† Manzil: alighting-place, or encampment.

MEKKA TO RÂBIGH

At each alighting-place a number of poor Africans went the round of the hâjji-companies. Standing in their rags, they would hold out their gourds or their hands, with a silent appeal in their eyes. Thin and starved were these poor pilgrims, and they tramped every inch of the long desert way on their feet. A spoonful of rice, or a crust of wooden bread or biscuit, a few dates, or a piece of water-melon was handed to each of these. Or, if the pot were nearly empty, they were given to understand that a spoonful of rice was to be shared equally by two of them. This they comprehended, and departed in company in order to seek further bounty elsewhere.

Towards evening the hills began to close in upon us, and at sunset we reached 'Usfân, where we put down close to the well. The mountains, approaching from either hand, join together at 'Usfân, which place is encircled by them on all sides save the southern. The storm of the preceding night had fortunately changed our order of travel from the nocturnal to the daylight.

We had scarcely sat to drink coffee and prepare our meal when Husayn came towards us, carrying his long pipe majestically in his hand. Behind him followed another Bedouin bearing my saddle-bags. We rose to receive the mukowwim, and all being seated again, he asked me to inspect the contents of my bags to ascertain that all my property was still intact. The nâga, he told us, had been recaptured before the advent of the storm, but my saddle-bags were then no longer on her back. They had been found by another rider, lying on the ground in the rain. Slinging them over his saddle, he had brought them to 'Usfân. Husayn was urgent to learn whether their contents were intact. Having inspected them, I found that nothing was missing.

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At 'Uṣfân I had my first opportunity of becoming acquainted with all the members of Shaykh Imbârak's party. They were seven in number: four men, including the shaykh, and three women. The men were tillers of the soil from the village of Anbâba in the Nile delta. They were dull of understanding, but their delight at being on their way to visit the tomb of their beloved Prophet showed them at their best and brightest. Two of the women were the respective wives of two of these peasants. They were coarse and ugly in appearance, being probably near the age of thirty. The third woman, whom I have already mentioned briefly in my account of the Wâdi, was the daughter of Shaykh Imbârak. Her name was Fâtma. Although a widow, she was still sufficiently young to be passably good-looking, but she was far too fat. At least I thought so, though her embonpoint made her all the more beautiful in Egyptian eyes. The Egyptian women diet themselves in order to become stout. One of their fattening foods is a coarse meal or flour which is largely composed of dried and crushed beetles.

Fâtma was my nurse when I was attacked by fever at the Wâdi. She hovered about me, arranging my pillow and awning, as I lay in the shugduf. She handed me the water-vessel when I wished to drink. She it was who boiled the milk which turned yellow and solid. Once I touched her unclean friendly little hand, and forgetting that the old man's eyes were upon us, would have taken it in mine. Shaykh Imbârak, removing his cigarette-holder from his mouth, said sharply, "Enough, O girl! Go!" And Fâtma, giving me a parting glance of her large dark eyes, drew her rusty head-veil over her face and walked away to her gossips at the opposite end of the line of shugdufs.

MEKKA TO RABIGH

A Malay merchant had brought to Mekka several cases of tinned pineapple from Singapore. (Most of the pilgrims who have been to Mekka before have something to sell on subsequent visits.) I had purchased several tins of this fruit, and now whenever I opened a tin of it I called to Eâtma and gave her a piece. With this stuff I "filch'd the heart" of the old man's daughter, so that she cooked my rice with that of the shaykh her father, and cleaned my plate after the meal. Shaykh Imbârak himself distrusted tinned food, and he refused to eat of my pineapple.

Fâtma rode in a shugduf with the wife of one of the peasants. The third woman rode with her husband. As they rode, the women chanted gasîdas in honour of the Prophet. Fâtma's voice was as substantial as her person, and the grinning Bedouins from all the nearer caravans would muster delightedly alongside her camel to hear her sing her songs. She sang in a quavering emotional voice which sent the Arabs into ecstasies of joy, so that they cried out repeatedly, "Mâ shâ Allah! Again, O my Lady! Again, again!" At the end of every line they groaned out the last long note in their braying voices, and laughed and shrieked and clapped their hands in delight. Thereupon, becoming intoxicated with so much popularity, Fâtma would sing a wanton flesh-potly ditty of Egypt. The old shaykh, sitting quietly in his favourite attitude in the jerking shugduf, would interrupt his eternal supplication for blessings on the Prophet in order to chuckle at some old memory of his youth evoked by the sensuous song. At other times he would rebuke the women, particularly when all three of them were squawking and quavering different tunes at once.

Having slept comfortably through the night, we

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prepared to remove from 'Usfân at sunrise. Our way led through a narrow passage between the encircling hills. Great boulders intercepted the track at intervals, and so narrow was the way that it would have been impossible for one camel to pass another. Up gradients and down declivities, the animals stumbled over the uneven surface. Half a score of dead camels lay scattered among the rocks by the wayside. These had bolted in terror during the storm of two nights ago, and had blindly buffeted themselves to death in the rocky broken ground. We heard that a Malay, riding on one of them, had been thrown and killed, while another had sustained a fractured arm.

The pass, which was perhaps a mile in length, rose to no great altitude. In several sloping places, the track had been roughly hewn into the form of steps. As our animals stumbled along the trench-like way, the shugdufs frequently came into contact with the rocks on either hand. At the top of the pass, a sabîl, or public water-tank, stands at the left-hand side of the track. This, said Hasan, was erected two hundred years ago at the charge of a Turkish pasha. It has not contained water within living memory, as the spring which once supplied it has long since dried up.

Descending the northern declivity, we came into a wide sandy plain which extended unbroken to the northern horizon. To eastward and to westward low chains of hills were visible for some distance.

Having marched all day across this plain, passing by the large village of Khulays, we came after night-fall to a village of rush huts, El Gudhayma. Here we remained until mid-afternoon on the following day. The villagers brought us poor dates and excellent water-melons. Their few palm-trees, situated to the

MEKKA TO RÂBIGH

eastward of the great well for which the place is famous were visible from the place of our encampment.

Leaving El Gudhayma at el 'asr, we marched all night across the level coastal plain, and reached the seaport town of Râbigh at dawn.

XXIX

RÂBIGH TO EL MEDĪNA

THE town of Râbigh is surrounded by a narrow broken belt of low sand-dunes, beyond which extends the flint-strewn wilderness. It is a seaport of some importance, and during the Hijâz war it largely took the place of Jidda as the port of Mekka. Its principal buildings lie at a distance of three or four miles from the seashore, where they are out of the reach of the waters of the Red Sea, which in rough weather are frequently forced up by the westerly wind until they inundate the low foreshore as far as the outskirts of the town.

The houses are built of mud bricks, and are scattered over the sand without any attempt at order. A small square fort, which was originally built by the Turks, now lies in ruins. To the southward of this fort is situated the market-place—a collection of open-fronted booths, resembling low cow-sheds, with walls of mud and roofs of rushes. A number of palm-trees flourish in the sand to north-westward of the town.

Many Bedouin women came about the shugdufs as soon as we had formed our encampment, and offered to sell us fans and baskets of plaited coloured grasses, linen money-bags, and other primitive articles which they spend much of their time in making. The shops in the market-place displayed the usual articles of food-stuffs. The hâjjis, particularly the Malays, were most

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attracted to a vendor of fried fish, whose goods resembled small bream.

Râbigh is the meeting-place of two main caravan routes from El Medîna—the Darb el Far'î and the Darb es-Sultâni. The former of these strikes directly inland from Râbigh in a north-easterly direction. The latter, keeping close to the seashore, proceeds northward as far as Bîr esh-Shaykh, which lies at about half-way between Râbigh and Yanbu. At Bîr esh-Shaykh this road divides into three tracks, the most westerly of which continues along the coast to Yanbu, while the central one joins the Yanbu—El Medîna road at Badr, and the easterly one joins the same road at Bir Husâni, somewhat to the eastward of Badr. We travelled by the route Râbigh—Bîr esh-Shaykh—Bîr Husâni—El Medîna.

A traveller from Râbigh may reach El Medîna without passing through any of these intermediate places, for the tracks divide and sub-divide constantly. Nearly all the valleys which lie among the maze of hills and mountains which shut off El Medîna from the coastal plain are used at times by the caravaners. The Darb es-Sultâni thus consists of many tracks running parallel to one another, but completely shut off and separated by the intervening hills, until the latter sink and terminate. These tracks cross and re-cross one another, and frequently it is a mere accident whether a caravan travels by one track or by another. When the track bifurcates, it often depends upon the caprice of the leading camel as to whether the caravan takes the right-hand or the left-hand way, for, as often as not, the Bedouin who rides him is asleep at the time. All roads lead to El Medîna, and the traveller keeps on going until he arrives there. Many camels have the

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good sense to stop as soon as they realise that the rider is asleep; and although the first point which the Bedouins take into account when selecting a camel to lead the caravan is the quality of senseless mechanical motion, yet few are the camels which never stop if left entirely to their own devices.

Our guide, Atîya, wished to pass through the village of El Hamra in order to visit his family of the Howâsib, a section of the Harb tribe, who were encamped there. Instead of guiding the kâfila himself, however, he left that duty to Hasan, who duly slept at the critical moment. Atîya was also asleep, beside his couched delul somewhere in the desert behind us. We passed somewhat to the south of El Hamra, and Atîya was therefore obliged to leave us when we removed on the following day, in order to visit his people. He found his way among the maze of valleys, and rejoined us later, between El Hamra and El Medîna.

At midsummer greater care is exercised in this matter, as it then becomes imperative for the caravans to encamp at places where the wells still contain water. Also, one road is frequently chosen instead of another, in order that a scene of Bedouin strife, or a feared ambush may be circumvented.

At el 'asr, having laid in a stock of the magnificent water-melons which at this season of the year abound in all the villages on this road, we loaded again and moved off. Passing a few hundred yards over a flat sandy expanse, we came suddenly upon a swiftly-flowing river, from fifteen to twenty yards broad, which, coming out of the plain to eastward, wound hither and thither in the sand until it entered the sea immediately north of Râbigh. Untying their camels, the Arabs slowly led them, one by one, across the

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stream, for the speed of the current was so rapid that without the utmost care the animals, with their unwieldy loads, would have been carried off their feet. The average depth of the river was some two feet, but it had quite recently been more than twice that depth, as the marks on the banks plainly showed.

This stream was the result of the storm which we had encountered between the Wâdi and 'Usfân; and this great volume of water still continued to flow down from the hills, which were nearly invisible in the hazy distance eastward. In a few more days, unless more rain fell, the flow would cease completely and leave the watercourse dry.

Having crossed the river, we entered among groves of date-palms which extended for nearly a mile; and upon leaving these we came out upon a flinty plain on which small chains and isolated dunes of sand had been heaped by the wind. A dozen young Bedouin girls, possessed of a robust beauty, flung laughingly along the road on their way to the town. Some of them held out their black head-veils for contributions of bread from the hâjjis. One or two endeavoured to assume the whining air of the professional beggar, but their efforts were transparently hypocritical and hard to sustain. The others laughed frankly and cried out, "Welcome to the hâjjis!" "Give us bread, O hâjjis, and Allah reward you!"

The sun was now sinking to westward, turning the flints to glittering jewels on a field of gold. A fresh north-westerly breeze blew cool and strong from the sea. I had experienced no recurrence of my fever, and in this pure sea-air I was gaining strength hourly. The hardships of insufficient repose and food, which in the stifling confines of the town would have had a depres-

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sing effect, had no such power here on the open plains. I was fortunate in making my journey before the summer heat had reached its height. Even as it was, travellers who passed us, going southward, complained of the heat. But travelling northward, we had the wind in our faces.

As we advanced I saw a strange figure hobbling among the scattered band of half-naked Africans who went on foot in front of us: short of stature, and slight, with legs clothed in an ancient pair of calico trousers into which were sown many patches of blue, pink, and yellow material. The head and shoulders were draped in an old and tattered black malâya, one corner of which hung down behind to the calves of the legs. The feet were wrapped in swathes of old rags, tied somehow about the insteps and ankles, which gave them a curiously large and ungainly appearance.

Then I saw this disreputable figure put out a small hand and arm, bare to the elbow, and touch one of the Africans on the shoulder, evidently asking for water. The African halted, and unhitching a tin can from his back, he removed the lid and handed the vessel to the ragged creature. The figure half turned towards our moving caravan, and the head-covering fell to the shoulders. Looking at the uncovered face, I saw that it was that of a woman. She was old and, I think, feeble, though her shambling gait may have been mainly due to her unwieldy footwear. But now I looked only at her face, which seemed to me to possess great beauty. Her cheeks were sleek and smooth, of a rich brown tint, and above her forehead waved and straggled a mass of silver hair. She drank of the water in the poor man's tin, briefly and sparingly, and gently handed the vessel back to him. Her lips moved, and though I could not

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hear her speech, I saw the benediction in her eyes, which were as clear and bright as those of a girl. The African took his tin carelessly, and replaced the lid. Then they turned and marched on again. The man soon out-paced and left her, and I saw that she was travelling alone in the desert way.

An Egyptian in the shugduf in front of us called to the old woman and handed her a piece of bread and some dates. These she received carefully as she pottered alongside the camel, and stowed them away in some recess among the folds of her ragged clothing. Her shambling gait looked painful, but I could not believe that it was so, because of the brave smile on her face. As our overtaking camel came abreast of her, my companion said, "Take, O my mother!" and held out a coin. She came nearer, and raised a hand to receive it, but the animal moved too fast for her, and so Shaykh Imbârak tossed the coin to the ground at her feet. She stopped and looked up at us with her strange smile before stooping to pick it up. Then I would have stopped our camel, that I might dismount and let her ride in my place; but as I changed my position in the shugduf I nearly overbalanced the contrivance, to the extreme alarm of the old shaykh. This caused apologies and laughter between us, and then we had passed onward . . . and there is something inevitable in the slow march of camels.

I looked out of the back of the shugduf, and there she was—shuffling along in her rags, a dozen yards in the rear. The smooth light brown of her face was brightened to a golden tint by the sunlight. Her uncovered hair was blown back by the wind. Occasionally her lips moved. Doubtless she was asking blessings on the Prophet. I do not know of what race she may

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have been. There she was in the wild desert road to El Medîna—alone. Soon night would overtake us—the camels would pass from her—but she seemed to have no thought of danger.

The foot-hills of the eastern range now began to encroach more closely upon the plain, and the ground surface which we traversed became undulating. Marching all night we came before sunrise to Mastûra, which consists of a well and a few poor rush huts scattered on the sandy plain. Mastûra is known in history as Abwâ, and it is related that the Prophet's mother, Amina, died here; though she is said to lie buried in the Maala at Mekka.

As we sat in the fresh westerly breeze and prepared our breakfast, several Arabs came about us, offering to sell bundles of firewood and girbas of water. Others carried over their shoulders long sticks on which were strung collections of brilliantly-coloured fishes. One variety was marked with alternate stripes of bright yellow and Prussian blue, another was black-headed and red-flanked, and a third was of shining silver. One of the vendors carried a young shark, three feet long, the tail of which flapped against his calves as he walked. A Malay came to buy, and the Arab offered him the shark. The Malay laughed and said "This one eats men. How then shall I eat it?" But the Arab did not understand him. I said to the fish-seller "These Malays, they will not eat a shark. They are more knowing as to fish than you are yourself. Wallah, they are people of the sea, brother!" The land-tilling Egyptians looked on with earnest faces, listening in wonder; only Shaykh Imbârak smoked his cigarette and gave little nods of comprehension and agreement.

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"Is it true that this fish eats mankind?" asked one of them.

I assured him that it was so, and Shaykh Imbârak said laconically, "Like a crocodile in the Nile."

"There is no power and no might, save in Allah!" exclaimed the peasant.

The fish-seller looked sharply at me, and then, grinning with a guilty air, he left us somewhat precipitately. I was doing his trade no good. When another approached, I purchased five little silvery perch at a halfpenny each. These I handed to Fâtma, bidding her to clean and cook them.

Removing again at mid-afternoon, we marched forward all night. We had rested well at Mastûra in the breeze-cooled plain; the moon was now flooding the silent wilderness with light; the caravaners were wakeful; Shaykh Imbârak became garrulous. He told me that he had been nine times to Mekka, and twice to El Medîna. I congratulated him.

"Formerly, Hâjj Ahmad," said he, "I had a wife in Mekka—a daughter of Mekka. Every year I went to Mekka in the Hajj, and she was there to receive me. She lived in her father's house, and I left money with her every year when I returned to Egypt."

"You were happy, in shâ Allah," I said.

"No!" said he, dogmatically. "She was a good woman, but Allah gave her no child. So I divorced her. And praise to God, first and last."

"One reads in the Egyptian newspapers that some of them desire to change the law, so that a man may take only one woman to wife," I said.

"Ha!" said he. "That is the work of those who busy themselves with politics. Among them are men whose thoughts are as the thoughts of the Christians,

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and who imitate the customs of the people of Europe."

"They say that the Egyptians are not pleased at having the English in their country," I remarked. "What is your thought in that matter?"

"Listen!" said the old man. "The English are estimable people. Wallah, estimable! Each one knows his work and he works. As for the fellahîn, they like the English. If there be anything which you wish to have rectified, the Englishman will listen to you; and if he accepts your view, he will rectify the matter without a bribe."

Behind us Fâtma began to sing a chant about the Prophet, and the old man fell to telling his beads again, muttering his supplication.

Before sunrise, we passed through a wide flinty depression, and reached the well Bîr esh-Shaykh as the sun rose. Here the mountains closed in before us, and sent a low broken chain of hills westward towards the sea. Before these, the ground presented a level sandy surface which was marked by the remains of many cooking-fires and other signs of departed caravans.

Sometimes the hâjji company would hand the camel-drivers' portion of food to them, when hâjjis and camel drivers would eat apart, each with their friends. At other times they cried out to the Arabs, "Come, O Hasan! O Atîya! O Hâmid! Do us the favour!" and all would sit down to eat out of the dish together. If the hâjjis showed a disinclination to prepare food, the Bedouins would say, "Up, O lads, and cook! We want cooked food to-day. Wallah, our bellies are empty!" Rarely would they assist in the preparation of food. Having attended to their camels, they would sit and

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watch with absorbed eyes the townsmen's careful cookery until bidden to eat.

This day, as we finished eating and sat waiting for Shaykh Imbârak to pour out tea, I asked Hasan concerning his history.

"Ah, hâjji," said he, "I am a child of Abyssinia, but I know nothing of the land of my birth. My mother was sold in Jidda when I was a baby, and I was still a baby when she died. So my master took me to El Medîna, and when I had grown to be a youth he sold me to Shaykh 'Amir of the Howâsib."

"Then who was your master in El Medîna?" I asked.

"He was a merchant in the sûk: his shop was beside the Egyptian Gate," he said. "His name was Shâkir abu Zeyd. He sold cotton goods and cloth, but he did not prosper. He returned to the mercy of God."

"Verily we belong to God! And your master, Shaykh 'Amir? Did he set you free?" I asked.

"He is dead," said Hasan. "God's mercy upon him. Before he died, he said in front of witnesses, 'This walad, Hasan, is free for the sake of God,* from the hour of my death; and his woman, Mabsûta, is free with him.' So when he died I was free."

"And now," I said, "how do you live? Have you camels of your own?"

"No, wallah! I have nothing," said he, "save what Allah gives me in the way of provision. My brothers, these Howâsib, give me a few rîyâls in the days of the Hajj in return for this work with the caravans."

"May Allah increase it, and open upon you," I said. "And have you not a wife?"

"Neither wife nor child," said the poor man. "My

* Literally, "to the Face of Allah."

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master, Shaykh 'Amir, gave me a slave-girl to wife; but she died after we were set free."

"Tell me," I said, "which is the better state, think you, to be a slave or to be a free man?"

"God is More Knowing," said he. "There is little difference between the two states. Perhaps I was somewhat more at ease in bondage, for then I belonged to the Howâsib, but now I have no people. I live among the Takârana in Mekka."

"Would you not like to go to El Habash?" I asked, "and you were born there."

"Never!" said Hasan. "That is a land of unbelievers and Nasâra."

"But," I said, "there are Muslimîn there also."

"Ay, yes," said he, "but here is the land of Allah, and we are all Muslimîn. So this is better, and let us praise Allah!"

A black little man he was, his face much pitted with old scars of small-pox. His crinkly hair was turning grey, and his forehead was heavily wrinkled. His clothing consisted of a dirty and ragged thawb, an old red kefiya and a hair-rope agâl, a torn and tattered abaya, and a pair of primitive sandals made of raw camel-hide. He limped painfully as he walked beside his camels in the desert marches, for the thongs of his sandals were constantly breaking and the skin of his feet was worn thin on the long road from Mekka. "After we leave Bîr Husâni I will wear your sandals, Hâjj Ahmad," said he, "for the ground is hard and hot in those valleys."

"Good!" I replied. "When we reach Bîr Husâni you shall wear them."

"I will not wear them now," said he, as simply as a child. "I will not wear them now for fear they

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should become ruined before we reach the stony ground."

We removed at mid-afternoon, and entering among the foot-hills, came, after six hours' march, to Bîr Husâni. Here we found several large caravans already encamped. One of these was going down to Mekka, after visiting the Prophet's City. The remainder were bound from Yanbu to El Medîna, by way of Badr which they had left that afternoon. The great concourse of men and camels here assembled made a continuous noise, as the former busied themselves with preparations for passing the night. Numerous cooking-fires blazed in all parts of the wide valley, and Arabs with small oil-lamps tied to the ends of sticks went hither and thither, guiding the incoming caravans to their couching-places. A row of stone hovels, in which articles of food were being sold, extended along the foot of the hill at the northern side of the valley.

We remained at Bîr Husâni until noon on the following day, when we again loaded and moved off. Our way now lay through sterile valleys, walled closely on either hand by overhanging mountains. In some of the higher ravines of these terrible rocks, said Hasan as he walked beneath us over the hot ground, there are running springs of water which nourish gardens of banana-trees, date-palms, and other fruit-trees. There also great stores of honey are collected and brought to El Medîna. The poor man's tales sounded fabulous, as we crawled like sun-dried insects among the black bases of those stupendous rock masses.

We were now cut off from the fresh breezes. The sun's rays seemed concentrated in the horrible depressions through which we stumbled. Contrasting our present state with that of the preceding days, it was

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as though a great lens had been placed in position before the sun. A fortunate result of the Wahnâbî occupation was that the discomfort of our travelling was not increased by the obstruction of robber-bands, though petty pilferers abounded in the camping-places.

At length the sun set, and night closed upon us. We halted long enough to perform the sunset prayer, as our custom was, and then marched forward all night.

Before daybreak we descended into a narrow ravine, known as Khuls, where we halted. Among the stones at the foot of the southern mountain there was a well, and at this point the ravine was over a hundred yards in width. A row of stone hovels, in which a few wretched Bedouins dwelt, extended along its northern side. These Bedouins existed by selling firewood and camel-fodder to the passing pilgrims and Arabs, and some of them possessed a few goats. I found it impossible to procure milk anywhere in this district, although goats with full udders frequently wandered about our encampment. The Arabs never sell milk: they look upon the practice as being shameful. Milk may be freely given, but not sold. Among the Harb tribesmen it is seldom given away, at least to strangers, but the prejudice against selling it is none the less strong on that account. Even in Mekka and El Medîna the milk-sellers are exclusively Indians or other foreigners. In Wâdi Fâtma one of the Egyptians had got milk for me by first presenting some bread to the owner of a goat; but elsewhere I had found it impossible to obtain a supply by those or any other means.

For stifling heat, Khuls was the worst place at which I had yet encamped. Great hills of blackened granite shut in the stony valley on every side. No tuft of grass,

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acacia tree nor thorn bush lived among those burning stones. Not a bird, beast, nor reptile moved there. Overhead the blue of the sky was obscured by the hard blaze of light which radiated from the white-hot furnace of the sun. The heat and the silence dazed the hâjjis as they lay close in the shugdufs. I had spread my blanket, carpet, and abaya on the framework of the tilt, but the heat which blazed upon them would not be withstood. Sometimes the hot silence in the valley seemed to give place to the shouting and clangour of a great host of armed men.

Soon after noon we again removed, and, marching through the interminable valleys, came in three hours to Bîr 'Abbâs. Here a hajj-road fort, built by the Turks, stood in ruins in the middle of a level expanse of stony ground. We passed by the well without stopping, and proceeded on our way.

Having marched ceaselessly throughout the night, we came at earliest dawn to a plain three or four miles in width, on which grew many acacia trees. This place is known as Bîr Darwîsh, or El Faraysh. A dry water-course ran through it; and on the banks of this, camel-grass, thorn bushes, acacia trees, and mimosa bushes grew thickly, giving a pleasant sylvan appearance to the prospect. A large well yielded excellent water, and there were other wells the water of which was somewhat brackish. A half-ruined hajj-road fort was situated in the middle of the valley, and on a low spur of the western hill there were a few empty huts. The latter are used by pilgrims for the purpose of performing total ablution before they enter El Medîna. A number of poor Bedouin children came about us as we dismounted. "Welcome to Muhammad's visitors!" they said with a sad-sounding intonation in their clear

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voices. They also cried "Yâ helay!" repeatedly. Neither my Egyptian companions nor I knew what they meant by that, but Hasan told us that it also meant "Welcome!"

Unlike the Mekkan Pilgrimage, the visit to El Medîna is not obligatory. The veneration which the Muhammadans entertain for their Prophet, however, induces all who are able to bear the expense, and who are not deterred by the hardships and danger of the expedition, to perform it. The Wahhâbîs discourage the visit to El Medîna; but the Wahhâbî king, being unwilling to lose the handsome revenues which he derives from this source, endeavours to impress upon his followers that it is to pray in the mosque that he permits the hâjjis to go to El Medîna, and not to visit the Prophet's tomb.

The traditions which represent the Prophet as saying "He who visits my tomb will surely enjoy my intercession," and again "He who comes to me as a visitor, being induced thereto by no other motive than to visit me: it shall be binding upon me to become his intercessor on the Day of Resurrection," are not regarded as well authenticated by the puritans. The Muslims are commanded in the Korân to salute the Prophet, but it is unnecessary for them to visit his tomb for that purpose. Said Muhammad, "Allah has said that He will cause the blessings and salutations of those that are afar off to reach me." The puritans, however, are in a distinct minority, and the visit to El Medîna is generally regarded as one of the most pious and profitable deeds which a Muslim may voluntarily perform.

To the Muslims Muhammad is the best of all mankind, angels, and jinn; and is the greatest and the last of the messengers of God. Muhammad himself is re-

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ported to have said "In the sight of Allah I am the most noble of those who have gone before and of those who come after; and in this is no boast."

After Muhammad, in order of precedence, come Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Noah, and the remainder of the prophets. These are followed by the chiefs of the angels—Gabriel, Michael, Isrâfil, and Azrâil.* Next come the first four khalîfas—Abu Bakr, Omar, Othmân, and Ali. Then come twenty Companions of the Prophet, to whom he gave the good tidings that God had already marked them out for entry into Paradise. These are followed by the three hundred who fought at the battle of Badr, the thousand who fought at Ohod, and the remaining Companions. The best of women are Mary the mother of Jesus, Fâtma the Prophet's daughter, Khadija his wife, and Aasiya the wife of Pharaoh, who believed in Moses—as is related in the Korân, Chapter *The Sovereignty*. Some authorities add a fifth perfect woman, Muhammad's favourite wife, 'Aisha.

The Egyptians, having broken their fast, set about bathing themselves in the stone huts. This done, they lay dozing in their shugdufs until noon, when the camel-men arose to prepare for the remove.

On leaving the valley of El Faraysh the road began to rise gradually. Sunset found us still ascending through valleys which were overgrown in places with thorn-bushes. Soon after nightfall, worn out with the fatigues of the eleven-days' journey from Mekka, I fell into a deep sleep.

* Gabriel is the messenger of revelation; Michael is charged with supplying the material needs of living creatures; Isrâfil with the duty of sounding the trump on the Last Day; and Azrâil with that of taking the souls of men from their bodies when the pre-ordained moment of their death arrives.

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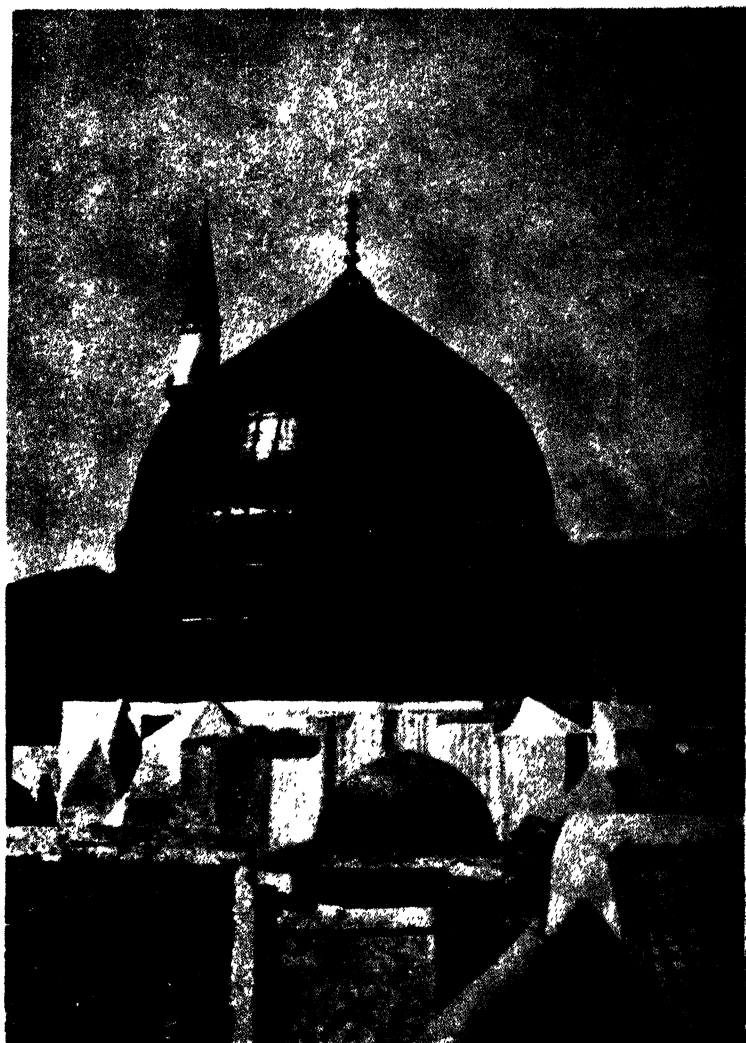
The sun had not yet risen when I awoke. By the grey light of dawn I saw that the caravan was emerging from the mountains among which we had toiled for the last three days. We had breasted the top of the last rise, and below us we saw an open plain stretching away to the eastward. We passed by the small mosque of 'Urwa, and along a rocky way hewn in places into the form of rough steps. Several large white houses lay in a depression to the southward, and beyond these were dim plantations of trees. Directly ahead was an outlying stone wall, and the road led round a corner of this to a large gateway. Further to the right rose the massive ramparts of a fortified city wall, and suddenly I caught sight of four lofty minarets which overtopped a mass of houses within the wall: it was El Medîna!

"O Allah, bless our Lord Muhammad, and give him peace! Peace be upon thee, O Messenger of Allah! Allah bless and give thee peace, and thou art living in thy tomb!" Eager voices arose in all the caravan. Fâtma began to chant "O my beloved! O Muhammad!"

Slowly the beasts moved forward. To our left was a high wall; to our right a mass of black lava sloped down to a depression; at the end of the straight road in front of us stood the great western gate of the city, called Bâb el 'Anbarîya.

Now there came walking from the city gate a number of shaykhs clad in white turbans and long jubbas of various colours.

These, as they approached our caravan, uttered the salutation of peace, and asked, "Who are you, O hâjji? and whence come you?" They were muzowwirs, come to claim their pilgrims and conduct them to their houses. Learning that I was from Damascus, one



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Aamir, a native of Algiers, gave me to understand that he would provide for my entertainment while I remained at El Medîna. This Moor had long been resident in the Prophet's City, whither he had been brought by his father when only five years old.

El Husayn, having shown his receipts for taxes paid in Mekka, the guard opened the gate to allow us to pass through.

I dismounted and walked with Aamir up the long straight road which led from the Bâb el 'Anbarîya to a large open space known as El Manâkha, the Couching Place. This space lies between the inner and outer walls of the city. It is half a mile long and some three hundred yards wide. From end to end it was closely packed with shugdufs, some of which were arranged in circles and others in straight lines. A few camels remained here and there, but most of the beasts had been led outside the wall after being unloaded. Passing through a narrow lane which had been left in the midst of the closely-packed shugdufs, we came to a gap in the inner wall. Through this we entered the city, and immediately there burst upon our view the beautiful sight of the Green Dome, beneath which lies the tomb of Muhammad. It rose above the high walls of the Great Mosque to half the height of the minarets, and its apex was adorned with a gilded ornament in the form of a series of metal spheres transfixed by a straight shaft and surmounted by a crescent. The golden ornament flashing in the newly-risen sun: the great dark-green dome beneath it: and the white minarets which rose about it, formed a picture of the most striking beauty and magnificence. Renewed cries of devotion and of salutation to the Prophet burst from the hâjjis.

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We now found ourselves in a road some eight yards in width, which led between the houses in a south-easterly direction towards the Great Mosque. Half-way along this street, which is known as El 'Aynîya, we halted and couched our camels. Aamir called a boy to carry my saddle-bags; then, having given Hasan the camel-man a mejîdi, and having taken leave of my Egyptian companions, I went with the muzowwir to his house. This was situated in the market street known as Es-Sûk. Arrived there, my companion installed me in a small but clean room, furnished with grass-mats and cushions, at the top of the house.

"Welcome, Hâjj Ahmad!" said the Moor cordially, as he came again with finjâns of coffee. "Blessed be thy visit to the City of Allah's Messenger!"

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THE visitor to El Medîna is enjoined to perform the rites of visitation immediately upon arriving in the city. I therefore lost no time in performing ablutions and assuming my town dress—a white turban, linen thawb, and black cloth jubba. This done, I descended with Aamir to the street.

At the bottom of my host's house there was a small shop fronting on the market street. Here Aamir sat when not conducting hâjjis, and sold turban shawls, strings of beads, tiny red leather bags full of kohl, and other articles of dress and toilet. A connection of his, a one-eyed youth of stern demeanour named Saad, officiated in the shop whenever Aamir was engaged in his other duties. Saad constantly read the Korân, with the sacred book held in such a way that if he was reading in the left-hand page his eye was close to the right-hand page; while in order to read in the right-hand page, he seemed to give his earnest attention to his right knee or to his toes or some other object which happened to be placed at a distance of six inches to the right of the book.

The street was full of Malays, Egyptians, Bokhârans, Indians, Afghans and others, who slowly sauntered along the narrow way in either direction, looking at the goods displayed in the little shops. We passed down with the crowd towards the eastern end of the street. On approaching the Mosque, the street makes a slight

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turn to the right, while on the left the shops terminate before a rectangular open space some eighty yards wide by twenty-five yards long. Here the uneven ground is covered with old dust of crumbled buildings, and over against the Great Mosque are several ruined walls of stone and mud—the remains of houses demolished by the Turks seventy years ago, when the Mosque was being rebuilt. This open space is called El Balât.

Rounding the bend in the street, we saw before us a lofty stone arch of semi-circular form, surmounted by a shallow dome, and forming the front of a porch with a floor-space some fifteen feet square. The apex of the arch was over thirty feet above the ground, but within the porch the domed ceiling rose considerably higher. The square pilasters of stone blocks forming the responds to the arch were surmounted by ornaments of an inverted scroll form, beneath which was a carved frieze of Korânic excerpts. The upper parts of the interior walls of the porch were decorated with painted designs. A smaller arched doorway, between twelve and fifteen feet high and eight feet wide, in the inner wall of the porch, opened into the Mosque. The arch of this doorway was filled by a grating of ornamental iron-work, and below this were fitted two massive wooden doors handsomely embellished with brass. The spandrels of the inner arch were adorned with carvings of an acanthus design. Four spherical glass lamp-bowls hung on chains depending from the vaulted ceiling. This structure forms the main gate of the Mosque. It is known as Bâb es-Salâm. The pious Muslim entering the Mosque for the first time invariably goes in at this gate. The great size of the porch, added to the general simplicity of its design, gives it an appear-



THE GATE CALLED "BAB ES-SALAAM," AT EL MEDINA

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ance of grandeur, which is greatly marred, however, by the somewhat mean-looking buildings which invest it closely on either hand. These buildings were formerly used as schools, but at the time of my visit they had been in disuse for nearly two years. In front of the right-hand one was a stone water-tank fitted with taps, at which those who are about to enter the Mosque perform their ablutions, if they have not already done so elsewhere. Bâb es-Salâm is at the eastern termination of the market-street, which it completely blocks.

Mounting two steps, my companion and I entered the porch, and taking off our sandals we handed them to a door-keeper, who placed them on one of a series of small shelves which stood against the left-hand wall. Aamir then led the way towards the inner door, and halted on the threshold. "Clasp thy right hand over thy left hand on thy breast; and enter with thy right foot," said he, placing his own hands one over the other on his breast. I imitated his example, and saying "In the Name of Allah: the Very Merciful; the Merciful," we entered. Thinking how few are the Europeans who have ever crossed that threshold, I was lost to my surroundings for a moment. The next thing I knew was that I was walking on a narrow carpet spread upon a marble floor, while two or three yards to my right rose a marble wall, far too thickly embellished along its whole length with gilded Korânic excerpts beautifully painted in the thuluthi script. To my left was a brass railing, three feet in height, which separated the broad passage-way down which I was walking from the remainder of the Mosque.

As we advanced, Aamir recited the following supplication, which I repeated after him:—

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“O God, Thou art peace; and from Thee issues peace; and unto Thee peace returns. Then grant that we may live in peace, O Lord, and bring us into The Garden—Thy Dwelling and the Home of Peace. Blessed art Thou, O our Lord, and Most Exalted. O Thou Possessor of Majesty and Honour!”

Half-way across the Mosque we came to a marble pulpit on our left hand, and a few paces further stood an isolated mihrâb. The latter was encased in slabs of white, black, red and green marble, arranged in elaborate patterns. It is known as Mihrâb en-Nabi—the Prophet’s prayer-niche.

Turning to our left, we passed between the pulpit and the mihrâb, and entered a forest of massive stone columns. To our right, that is, to eastward, a beautiful screen of green-painted iron and brasswork, extending from floor to roof of the Mosque, was visible through the rows of columns. From its upper extremity, great curtains of dark-green silk hung in festoons, being caught up with brass chains or hooks. Unseen behind that screen lay the Prophet’s tomb.

The space between the tomb chamber (El Hujra) and the pulpit is known as Er-Rawdhat el Mutahhara—the Purified Luxuriant Garden. Said the Prophet, “The space which lies between my chamber and my pulpit is a garden of the gardens of Paradise.” This is the site of the original mosque which was built by the Prophet’s command. Adjoining it stood ‘Aisha’s house, where now stands the tomb chamber; for Muhammad was buried in the house of his favourite wife. All the columns in this part of the Mosque are encased, up to a height of some ten feet, in a panelling of marble slabs, and are painted silver green, red, yellow and white

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in gaudy designs. Above the panelling the columns are painted a dull red or brown.

There is a barbaric quality in the decorations of the Mosque of El Medîna. It strikes the same note of crude sumptuousness as a grand vizier's palace in an Arabian Nights tale. The embellishments cannot be called tawdry, but they have been laid on with far too lavish a hand, and without discernment.

Turning about, we faced the mihrâb and performed the customary prayer of two prostrations in salutation of the mosque. Then, sitting cross-legged before the mihrâb, we raised our hands palms upward, and gave thanks to God for having enabled us safely to reach the tomb of His Prophet. This being completed, we rose and passed out of the Rawdha, walking through the space between the tomb-chamber and the mihrâb. This brought us again into the railed-off passage leading from Bâb es-Salâm to the tomb. Before us rose the high railing, partially draped with green curtains. In the railing itself, at a height of five feet from the ground, were three circular apertures in line, each large enough to admit a man's hand. The left-hand aperture is known as the Prophet's window; the second as the window of Abu Bakr; and the third as that of Omar; for, by 'Aisha's permission, the first two Khalîfas were also buried in the Prophet's tomb-chamber.

Now, standing opposite the Prophet's window, and facing the railing but not touching it, our backs being turned towards Mekka, we repeated the following salutation to the Prophet:—

“In the name of Allah, The Compassionate,
The Merciful. Blessing and peace be upon thee,
O Chief of Mankind, Illuminator of Darkness,
and Messenger of Allah the All-Knowing King.

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Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou to whom the stones spoke; and for whom the moon was split asunder; and to whom trees ran that they might give thee answer. Blessing and peace be upon thee, O our Lord, our Prophet, and our Beloved: our Intercessor and our Delight. O our Lord! O Messenger of Allah! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O Prophet of Allah, O Beloved of Allah! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou whom Allah girded with the sword of victory! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou who intercedest with Allah for the sinner! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O thou Foremost of Allah's created beings, and Seal of Allah's messengers! Blessing and peace be upon thee, O Muhammad, O son of Abdulla, O son of Abdul Muttalib, O son of Hâshim! O Tâhâ! O Yâsin! O Bearer of good tidings! O consecrated to Allah! O Enlightener! O Leader of the host of the prophets and messengers! We have come to thee as visitors; and have sought thee longingly; and now we stand at thy door. Exclude us not from the door of thine intercession. Behold, O Messenger of Allah, I have come to thee fleeing from my sin and my misdeeds, seeking to draw nigh unto thee, and to beg thine intercession with my Lord. Therefore intercede for me, O thou Intercessor of the people! Thou art the acceptable intercessor. Thou art the pleader for whose intercession we hope when the foot slips on Es-Sirât.* We testify that thou hast discharged

* Es-Sirât is a bridge, finer than a hair and sharper than a sword, which will be stretched across the yawning pit of Jehannam at the Last Day. One end of it will be at the standing-place of humanity on the earth, and the other end will be at the gate of

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thy mission. Thou hast given good counsel to the people. Thou hast striven valiantly in the way of Allah. Thou didst serve thy Lord until the unquestionable truth came to thee. We beg that thou wilt intercede for us, and our parents, and our teachers, and our neighbours, and for all who receive us with kindness. Blessing and peace be upon thee, O Leader of the prophets and messengers! And praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds."

Taking a pace to the right, we faced the window of Abu Bakr and uttered long greetings to him also. This accomplished, we followed a similar procedure at Omar's window; after which we went close to the Prophet's window and looked in. I saw nothing save a black pall or curtain hanging several feet away from the railings. There now remained no costly ornaments whatever. Most of the jewels which once hung before the tomb had been long since removed by Fakhri Pasha, the last Turkish governor of El Medîna, and sent to Enver Pasha and Talaat Pasha in Constantinople. The last of the treasures are said to have been removed by the Sharîf Ali, governor of El Medîna during the reign of King Husayn. The eunuch aghas who guard the tomb are generally believed also to have made a practice of stealing the rich gifts of pilgrims from time immemorial.

The extravagant salutations and supplications which my guide addressed to the Prophet are regarded as unholy by the puritans. Before we began to perform the rites, my guide had confided to me with a secret air that he would now "visit me the tomb according to the manner of the true Muslimîn who love Allah's Prophet Paradise. Only the righteous will be enabled to pass safely across Es-Sirât, without falling headlong into Jehannâm.

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—God bless him and give him peace!”—thereby giving me to understand that in according me this privilege he ran some risk of violence at the hands of the fanatical Wahnâbîs who were in the city.

The Wahnâbîs and other puritans are largely guided in matters of ritual by the writings of Ibn Taymiya. I have heard it declared by more than one learned shaykh that it was through reading the books of this jurist that Ibn Abdul Wahnâb, the founder of the Wahnâbî brotherhood, was impelled to begin his campaign of puritanism. Concerning the visit to El Medîna, Ibn Taymiya writes:—

“When the Muslim enters El Medîna let him repair to the Mosque of the Prophet—Allah bless him and give him peace!—and there pray: for one prayer in this mosque is better than a thousand prayers in any other, save only the Haram of Mekka. Let him then salute the Prophet and his two companions; for of a truth he said, ‘If any man salute me, verily Allah will give back my spirit unto me, that I may return his salutation.’ This is related by Abu Daud and others.*

“Abdulla, the son of Omar, when he entered the Mosque used to say simply: ‘Peace be upon thee, O Prophet of Allah! Peace be upon thee, O Abu Bakr! Peace be upon thee, O my father!’ And so he would depart. It was thus also that the Companions saluted the Prophet.

“According to the majority of the ‘ulemâ, in-

* Any traditional saying of the Prophet, if it is to be regarded as trustworthy, must be vouched for by one having authority. The two most reliable collections of traditions are those of El Bukhârî and Muslim. These two men accepted no tradition as genuine unless it was confirmed by evidence from several different sources.

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cluding the Imâms Mâlik, Esh-Shâfi‘î, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, it is correct for the visitor to face the tomb, that is, to stand with his back turned towards the Kibla. The Imâm Abu Hanîfa, on the other hand, says he should face the Kibla, and accordingly some of the followers of this Imâm say that the visitor should turn his back to the Hujra, while others say he should stand so that it is at his left hand.

“All authorities agree that the visitor must not touch nor kiss the Hujra, nor circumambulate it, nor pray towards it. And if the visitor says in his salutation ‘Peace be upon thee, O Messenger of Allah! O Prophet of Allah! O Best of Allah’s created beings! O Most Honoured by thy Lord of all creation! O Leader of the pious ones!’: if he says this, then he has said all, for these are all the attributes which are his—Allah bless him and give him peace! Let him offer up no supplication as he stands over against the tomb, for this is entirely forbidden by general consent of the Imâms. The Companions did not so, but instead, they faced the Kibla and offered up their supplications in the Mosque. Verily, the Prophet said ‘O God! Let not my tomb become an idol that is worshipped.’ He also said ‘May Allah curse the Jews and Nazarenes, for that they have taken the tombs of their prophets as places of worship. Beware ye of what they have done!’ And after his death ‘Aisha said, ‘Had it not been for this, he would have directed that his tomb be made conspicuous, but he feared that it would be used as a place of worship.’ ”

My companion, in saying at the tomb “We beg that thou wilt intercede for us . . .” was guilty of bid‘a.

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The puritans, when pressed, will admit that it is their belief that Muhammad will be the intercessor for the Muslimîn on the Last Day. But, say they, we have no exact knowledge of the matter; such things are known to God alone. Is it not possible, they would imply, that God may withdraw the power of intercession from His Prophet, or that He may never confer it upon him: "Who is he that may intercede with Him, save by His gracious permission?" ("The Throne Verse," Chapter *The Cow*.)

Prayers said in mosques which contain tombs are held by many puritans to be unlawful; because the ignorant worshipper, having prayed to God, is apt to turn next to the grave and pray to the mouldering bones of its inmate. I myself have heard men among the lower orders of Egyptians, in the Mosque of El Husayn in Cairo, begging the martyred son of Ali to send them sums of money or good crops. In the tomb-mosque of Zaynab, I have heard women implore that departed lady to make their wombs fruitful.

We now passed round to the eastern side of the Hujra, and came to a stand opposite a window in the stone wall of the mosque. At the spot on which we stood the Prophet received many of the Korânic revelations. Facing the Hujra, we saluted Allah's messenger to the Prophet, the angel Gabriel, and also the remaining three archangels, Michael, Isrâfil, and Azrâil the angel of death.

Passing round then to the northern side of the Hujra, we stood before the tomb of Fâtma, which stands separate from the vault containing the remains of the Prophet and his two companions, and repeated this invocation:—

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“Peace be upon thee, O our Lady Fâtma the Fair! Peace be upon thee, O daughter of Allah’s Messenger! Peace be upon thee, O daughter of Allah’s Prophet! Peace be upon thee, O thou Chief of Women! Peace be upon thee, O Fifth of the People of the Garment!* May Allah Most High be pleased with thee, and content thee with the best of pleasures. Peace and Allah’s mercy and His blessing be upon thee, and upon thy father, the chosen one, and upon thy excellent husband, and thy sons the two Hasans.”

Fâtma’s tomb, a catafalque draped with a black pall, can be seen through the screen of the Hujra. There is a doubt as to whether the Prophet’s daughter is really buried within the Mosque, or in the cemetery El Bakî’a outside the city wall. The pilgrims repeat their salutations at both graves.

The Hujra is said to contain a fifth space or grave which is believed to be destined to receive the body of Isa bin Maryam (Jesus Christ). The manner in which this will be fulfilled is related by the Muslims thus:—

“The second of the Greater Signs of the approach of the Last Day will be the descent from the heavens of Isa—Blessings and peace be upon him! He will come with his hands resting upon the wings of two angels, and will alight upon the white minaret eastward of Damascus. Then El Muhdi† will come to him from the

* The People of the Garment (ahl el Kisâ) were the Prophet, his daughter Fâtma, her two sons Hasan and Husayn, and their father Ali ibn Abi Tâlib, the fourth Khalîfa. The Prophet once wrapped his abaya about himself and these four, in order to demonstrate their special connection or kinship with himself, and their consequent eminence. After this incident they became known as the People of the Garment (cf. Ruth 3, ix.).

† El Muhdi is to be the reformer of Islâm: he may be compared to the Jewish Messiah.

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Land of the Greeks, or from Mount Sinai, and Isa will lift up his voice and say 'O people! Give praise unto your Lord and glorify Him.' This the assembled people will do; and when the hour of prayer has come, then will the people call upon him to lead them in prayer. But he will refuse, and will say, 'Your imâm must be one of yourselves.' Then will El Muhdi come forth and lead him (Isa) and them in prayer. This shall Isa do in honour of this nation and its Prophet—upon whom be blessings and peace.

"At that time it shall come to pass that Ed-Dajjâl* shall be engaged in besieging the people of Jerusalem, whose gate shall be locked against him. And he shall say, 'Open ye the gate!

"Now when Isa shall have come unto them they will open the gate. Then shall Ed-Dajjâl see Isa, and straightway shall flee from him, he and they that are with him. And Isa shall go forth with El Muhdi in search of him; and Allah shall circumscribe the earth about him so that Isa shall overtake him, he and they that are with him, nigh unto the gate of Ludd. Then Isa—on whom be peace!—shall look upon him and say 'Perform thy prayers!' But Ed-Dajjâl shall say, 'O Prophet of Allah, they have been performed!' Upon which Isa will say, 'O thou enemy of Allah! Of a truth thou hast asserted that thou thyself art the lord of the worlds: therefore thou didst not pray.' And Isa shall strike him with a javelin, and slay him.

"And Isa shall command great diligence in keeping the laws of our Prophet—Allah's peace and blessings be upon him!—and in his time there shall be great

* Ed-Dajjâl, the Impostor (or El Masih ed-Dajjâl, the lying Christ), is a false Messiah who is to appear on earth shortly before the Last Day. His followers will be chiefly Jews, and he is identified by some authorities as the Messiah of the Jews.

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security and tranquillity, abundance, ease, and great blessedness. This shall continue for forty years. And Isa shall take a woman to wife, and two sons shall be born to him. Then shall El Muhdi die, and Isa shall pray over his body and bury him in Jerusalem.

"Then Isa too shall die, being now come to the age of seventy-three years—having lived three and thirty years before his ascent into heaven, and forty years after his second coming. He shall die at El Medîna, and shall be buried beside Abu Bakr the Trustworthy—May Allah be pleased with him!"

In the northern side of the Hujra is the iron gate which gives access to the interior. This is opened every evening by the eunuch guards, who then light lamps within the chamber. Visitors may enter upon making a considerable present to the Chief Agha. For this purpose they are made to put on a set of clothes similar to those of the aghas, consisting of a voluminous white jubba with very long sleeves, a broad sash, and an enormous white turban. No one ever enters unless the aghas know exactly who he is.

"The Sultân Mahmûd Nûr ed-Dîn (Sultân of Syria 1145-73 A.D.)," writes Es-Samhûdî in his history of El Medîna, "one night saw the Prophet three times in a dream. Each time that he appeared to him, the Prophet said 'O Mahmûd! Rescue me from these two persons!' And behold, there were two red-haired persons opposite to him.

"Rising before dawn, the Sultân summoned his vizier and told him of these things. Then said the vizier 'This is a matter which has happened in El Medîna. No one but you may deal with it.'

"So the Sultân made ready a thousand beasts, and proceeded to El Medîna, which he entered without

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anyone's being aware that he was coming. The first thing he did was to order that the names of all people in the city were to be written down, in order that he might distribute alms to them. Then he gave away much money, and what was due to each man he himself put in that man's hand. This he did in order that he might be enabled to look closely at each one, hoping that he would recognise the two red-haired men whom the Prophet had pointed out to him in his dream. But among all those who came forward he did not see those he sought. Therefore he asked: 'Has anybody not received alms?'

"The people replied: 'Nobody remains save two sojourners from Andalusia, who are lodging in the hospice which stands before the Prophet's Hujra—Allah bless him and give him peace!' Then they persevered in the search for them until at last they brought them before the Sultân, who, as soon as he saw them, said to his vizier: 'These are indeed the two.'

"Then he asked them concerning themselves, and they answered and said 'We came that we might sojourn in the Prophet's City.'

"Said the Sultân, 'Tell me the truth!' and he put them to torture. Then they confessed that they were Christians, and that they had come there in order to carry him away who was in the Hujra. This they would do at the instigation of their kings.

"It was found that they had dug a hole in the ground beneath the Mekka-ward wall of the Mosque, in the direction of the Hujra, throwing the loose earth into a well in the hospice. It is also related that they kept the earth in their store-closets, whence they would carry it out and fling it beyond the city.

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"Upon hearing these things, the Sultân cut off the heads of those two men beside the window to eastward of the Hujra, in the outer wall of the Mosque. After that he had them burnt with fire.

"Finally he ordered a trench to be dug about the Hujra, and into it was poured molten lead and brass; and the greatest precautions were taken to keep the tomb inviolate. Then the Sultân Nûr ed-Dîn mounted his horse and returned to Esh-Shâm."

Excluding renowned shayks of religion, the only people who are admitted into the Hujra, without first being thoroughly catechised, are kings and princes. Even these are expected to enter for the ostensible purpose of performing some menial service; admission for the purpose of examining the interior is not permitted. The visitor takes a broom, a duster, or a lighted lamp, and silently assists the aghas in their duties. The actual vault containing the tombs of the Prophet and his two companions is always covered with a black pall. The tombs are said to be surmounted by a black stone building, but no Arab writer has given a convincing account of the interior of the sepulchre, for the reason that nobody save the aghas, and those who constructed it, has ever seen it. I was informed that the aghas are dumb on this subject, and I myself did not venture to open the question with any of them. The people of El Medîna make a greater mystery of Muhammad's tomb than the Mekkans make of the Kaaba. One of their tales is that when the lamps in the Mosque are put out, a light emanates from the Prophet's tomb and illuminates it more brightly than before. It is comparatively easy to sustain this story as the Mosque is closed at night, except during Ramadhân and on occasions when the hâjjis in the city are very numerous,

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and at such times the lamps are left burning. The curtains which hide the tomb are changed by the aghas at night, when the doors of the Mosque are locked.

The tale which relates that Muhammad's body is contained in a coffin suspended between heaven and earth is unknown among the Muhammadans themselves.

Within the Hujra, at the left-hand side of the door, the Kûfic Korân of Othmân, the third khalîfa, is said to be preserved. This book is reputed to be one of the seven copies which were made when Othmân ordered the rescension of all the then existing copies. Othmân's Korân is never opened save in times of great affliction, such as the approach of the plague. At such times the 'ulemâ enter the Hujra and read aloud from the sacred volume. This procedure is believed to bring the blessing of security to the city.

At the moment of Othmân's assassination he was reading in this book, and it is said that his blood still stains the page at the words "God shall protect thee against them, for He both hears and knows."

Leaving the tomb of Fâtma, we returned to the eastern side of the Hujra, and facing in the direction of the cemetery El Bakî'a, we saluted the dead who are buried there, addressing them as "People of El Bakî'a." Then, turning in the direction of Mount Ohod, we saluted Hamza and the other martyrs who fell with him at the Battle of Ohod. Further prayers are then said at the Prophet's window, and at Othmân's mihrâb in the southern wall of the Mosque. The pilgrim is then at liberty to offer up his private supplication to God, and the rites of visitation are completed.

The moment I had finished these rites I became aware that wherever I moved there was somebody

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sitting on the floor in front of me, with his handkerchief spread out before him. Whichever way I turned I found a spread handkerchief with a few coins lying upon it, to indicate what was expected of me. I dropped a coin on two or three of the handkerchiefs, whereupon their owners at once gathered them up, rose, and walked away to spread them elsewhere. Some of them ran in their haste to find other hâjjis.

At last I refused all further solicitations, and leaving Aamir to return to his shop, I sat down with my back resting against a pillar to await the midday prayer which was near at hand. I found considerable amusement in observing the eagerness of the Medînans to extract money from the hâjjis. When a pilgrim was seen walking among the columns, a Medînan would creep quietly behind each of the pillars in his line of march, and spreading a handkerchief on the ground, would await his approach with an unconscious air. If the hâjji turned aside, the cadgers snatched up their handkerchiefs and took up a new position which their victim appeared likely to pass.

Men and boys of all ages engaged in these activities, from grey-bearded men to urchins of twelve years. All were cleanly dressed in white turbans and thawbs, and cloth jubbas.

XXXI

TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES ON EL MEDĪNA

EL MEDĪNA lies on the Central Arabian Plateau, thus differing from Mekka, which is a city of the coastal plain.

The town is situated nearly in the middle of a number of mountain groups, which are ranged about it somewhat in the form of a horseshoe, the opening of which is towards the south-east. The names of the chief of these mountain groups are: Jebel Ohod and Jebel Thowr, on the north; Jebel 'Ayr, on the south-west; and Jebel Sal'a, on the west. Within these encircling mountains the ground, which consists of a sandy loam with out-croppings of rock, slopes gently from south to north, thus according with the general slope of the whole of the Central Arabian Plateau.

The distance between Jebel Ohod and Jebel 'Ayr is some ten miles; while, from the foot of the western hills, the plain stretches southward and eastward beyond the enflanking mountains as far as the eye can see. From Jebel 'Ayr to within a distance of less than half a mile of the walls of El MedĪna, the ground consists of a broken slope of volcanic rock; and on the plain to eastward of the city lies a superimposed mass of black lava. The latter extends to within a mile of the eastern gate of El MedĪna—called Bâb el Jum'a or Bâb el Bakĭa. It is known as El Harra. It is probably much more than ten miles in length, from west to

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east, and is some two miles wide. It comes to an abrupt termination at a distance of half a mile from the mountain range of Jebel Ohod, to which it runs parallel; and on the opposite flank it forms, for some distance, the right bank of a shallow watercourse which flows westward to El Medîna. This watercourse passes along the southern wall and through the eastern suburbs of the city, and then flows north-westward into the hills.

The lava stream of El Harra is about ten feet thick, and on all sides it rises abruptly from the sandy soil, like a black wall.

The people of El Medîna relate that when Muhammad, soon after his arrival in that city, took up arms against the Jews who dwelt there, the latter buried their jewels and money in the Harra. Afterwards the Muslims strove to unearth those treasures, but with very little success. The bulk of the buried hoard has never been found. Occasionally some Bedouin, scratching with his stick in the cavities of the porous rock, discovers a solitary gold coin or an ear-ring, but that is all.

The space between the Harra and the city is thickly grown with palm trees, and in the shade cast by these, birsîm, wheat, barley, tomatoes, and several other sorts of vegetables are grown.

The fields in this neighbourhood resemble deep pits; for the husbandmen, seeking a richer soil, have dug to a depth of some eight feet, and piled the upper earth in wall-like heaps at the sides. To southward of the city, groves of palm, ithl, and lote trees extend in the form of a wedge between the Harra and Jebel 'Ayr, for a distance of six or seven miles. Houses and small villages lie scattered among the trees, but at the

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time of my sojourning there these were, almost without exception, ruined and deserted. The fields also, save those near Bâb el Bakîa, were untilled and bare. This melancholy state of affairs was a result of the Wahhâbî siege.

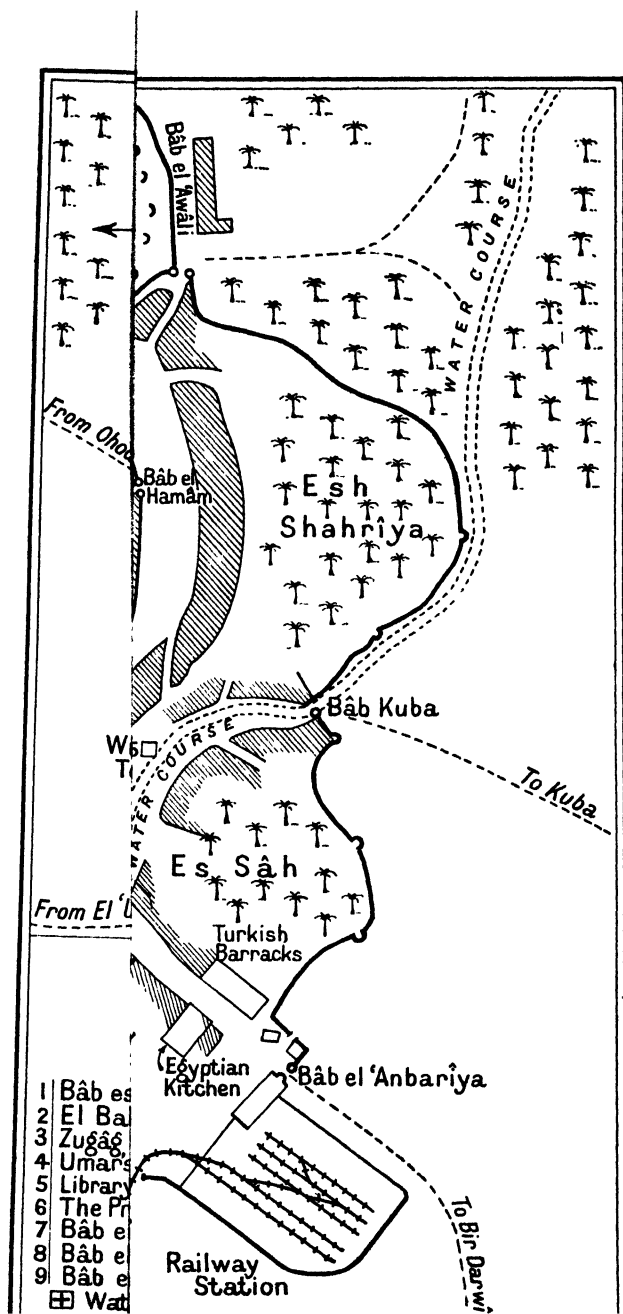
Somewhat to the north-west of Jebel Ohod, beyond the western spur of the mountain, there is an extensive oasis known as El 'Uyûn. The palm groves and fields of birsîm which flourish in this spot are kept alive by several springs of brackish water.

El Medîna, or Medînat en-Nabi,* is of an oval form, its greatest dimension being from east to west. It is protected by a high strong wall, in which there are many bastions and nine gates. The names of the latter are: Bâb el Jum'a or Bâb el Bakîa, facing east; El Bâb el Mejîdi, El Bâb el Basri, and El Bâb esh-Shâmi, facing north; El Bâb es-Saghîr, El 'Aynîya, and El Bâb el Masri, facing west; Bâb esh-Shûna, and Bâb el Hamâm, facing south.

El Bâb esh-Shâmi and El Bâb el Masri (the Syrian and Egyptian Gates respectively) are very fine structures, with massive bastions containing guard-rooms. El 'Aynîya possesses no gate: it is merely a gap in the wall, which was made by the Turks when they constructed the new street known as El 'Aynîya. To the eastward of Bâb el Jum'a lies the cemetery El Bakîa, the low western wall of which is near the eastern wall of the city, being only a few feet from it. The walls approach one another so closely that a wooden gate has been constructed at that point, in order that the gap may be closed at night.

A second wall, of considerable strength but less

*El Medîna means "the City": Medînat en-Nabi, the Prophet's City.



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massive than the inner wall, extends irregularly from a point in the southern wall of the Bakîa cemetery to the fort at the western end of the city. The two walls enclose some two square miles of ground, considerably less than half of which lies within the inner wall. The gates in the outer wall bear the following names:—Bâb el 'Awâli, and Bâb Kuba, facing south; Bâb el 'Anbarîya, and Bâb es-Sayl, facing west; Bâb el Kûfa, facing north. With the exceptions of Bâb el 'Anbarîya and Bâb Kuba, the gates in the outer wall appear to be of no great defensive value.

The Muslim historians record that the first person to build a wall about El Medîna was Muhammad ibn Is-hâk, governor of the city in 236 A.H. (850 A.D.). It was rebuilt in 540 A.H. by order of the Sultân of Mosul. In 557 A.H. the Sultân Mahmûd Nûr ed-Dîn, when visiting the city in order to thwart the two Christians who designed to steal the Prophet's body, ordered that the outer wall be erected. Both walls have been rebuilt several times, the last to rebuild the inner wall being the Turkish Sultân Abdul Azîz, in A.D. 1867.

The western part of the space which lies between the outer and inner walls of the city is filled by the large suburbs of Es-Sâh, El 'Anbarîya and El Wajha; while the southern part is occupied by palm groves, among which are mud houses and walled camel yards. The latter district is known as Esh-Shahrîya.

Between the suburb El Wajha and the inner wall is the couching place of the caravans, El Manâkha.

Outside the northern and western walls stand many large buildings, some of which appear to have once been magnificent palaces. These houses were built by wealthy Turks and others who settled here in the days of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd. El Medîna, with its

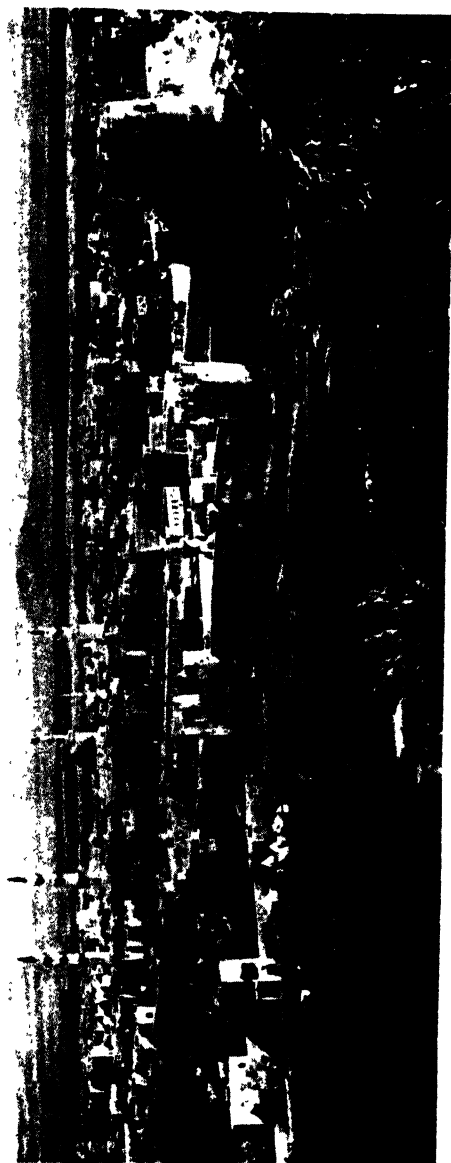
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gardens, and its railway bringing fruits and vegetables and stores of merchandise from Damascus, was not an unpleasant place of retirement to men wearied by the stress of the modern world and disgusted by its disregard of religion. The opening of the Hijâz Railway in 1908 marked the beginning of a great influx of wealthy permanent residents to El Medîna. Soon afterwards the population of the city probably reached a higher level than it had ever reached before.

The rise of the Turkish nationalists, however, brought a feeling of insecurity into this sanctuary; for the nationalists did not value the possession of the Haramayn, and scarcely considered the honour worth the expense to which Turkey was put by having to bribe the Arab tribes to refrain from obstructing the roads. The fear that the Arab prince Ibn Rashîd, Amîr of Hâil, desired to get possession of the city, and the greater fear that the dreaded Wahhâbîs of the south might repeat their exploits of the beginning of the nineteenth century, had already induced many to leave it before the Sharîf Husayn declared war on Turkey.

Since that event misfortune has persistently followed El Medîna, culminating in the Wahhâbî siege, which lasted fifteen months. The end of that siege found the stricken city with only 6,000 inhabitants remaining, although at one time her resident population is said to have been 70,000 or 80,000 souls.

Walking in the silent lanes without the walls, I heard no sound of human voices. Some of the buildings—those near the city walls—were closed and appeared to be undamaged. Others, which lay further out, were crumbling to total ruin, for the thieving Bedouins had



EL MEDINA, LOOKING TOWARDS THE SOUTH-EAST

In the foreground lie the Citadel and the Syrian Gate. Nearly above the latter is the distant Green Dome. The great size of the Mosque is shown by the position of the minarets.

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torn away the wooden beams and casements for the purpose of feeding their camp fires.

The railway station lies at the western end of the city, beside the Bâb el 'Anbarîya. It is a rectangular walled enclosure projecting beyond the outer city wall, and the offices are in a two storeyed-building beside the gate. At the time of my visit there were several rusty locomotives, and a number of broken passenger carriages and goods trucks in the compound. No train had entered or left the station for many months.

At the north-western extremity of the city there is a small square fort, which was built by the Turkish Sultân Selîm in 939 A.H. (1532 A.D.). It stands on a rising ground, and is strongly built of stone. Its walls are some thirty-five feet in height, and a round watch-tower rises above its western ramparts. The hill of Jebel Sal'a which overlooks it is crowned with another small fort, built by the Turks in recent years. This commands the road to Jebel Ohod, and also serves to protect a large wireless telegraph station which stands below it on the plain at a distance of some three miles from the Syrian Gate. The lofty steel masts of the telegraph are planted eighty or a hundred yards apart, and at their feet are low stone buildings. The whole is enclosed by a wall ten feet high.

A thin wall of mud and stone extends eastward from the angle of the telegraph compound. It crosses the road from Jebel Ohod, and continues south-eastward until it comes to within five hundred yards of the Bâb el Mejîdi in the city wall, where it terminates. This wall was built by King Husayn, who dreamed of filling the space which it encloses with gardens and houses. This space is perhaps as large as that enclosed

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by the two city walls. I found a few straggling palm trees standing in the waterless soil, but they were dying for the lack of human hands to tend them.

The principal street of El Medîna is the market street called Es-Sûk. This runs from the Egyptian Gate to the great gate of the Mosque, Bâb es-Salâm. It is paved with cobbles of granite, and is lined from end to end with small shops, which are mere cupboards in the ground floors of the tall houses of the muzawwirs. A longer and wider street, with few shops, leads from the Syrian Gate in a south-easterly direction, and crossing El Balât, joins Es-Sûk at a distance of eighty yards from the Mosque gate. This street is called Es-Sâha. A number of fine old houses are situated in it, and between them are meaner dwellings. As in Mekka, there are no spaces between the houses: a continuous line of dark-shuttered house-fronts extends on either side of the winding street from end to end.

Immediately within the Egyptian Gate a street leads out of Es-Sûk, and passing northward parallel to the western wall of the city, joins the street Es-Sâha near the Syrian Gate. It is called Zugâg Mâlik ibn Anas. The houses in this street completely overtop the city wall and look upon the Manâkha, for the ground-level within the wall has risen to within four feet of the top of the parapet. Without the wall the Manâkha lies twenty feet below; there the caravans put down their loads. Along the foot of the wall extends a line of little shops, empty save in the Hajj months.

Seventy yards north of the Egyptian Gate is the breach of El 'Aynîya. From this breach in the wall a wide straight street leads to the open space El Balât and the Great Mosque. This street is flanked along half its length by arches, beneath which are shops.

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El 'Aynîya was hewn through the massed houses of the city somewhat more than half a century ago by the modernising Turks.

The oldest quarter of El Medîna is that which lies at its eastern end, between the Great Mosque and the Bâb el Bakîa. Here, many of the streets are so narrow that two men, walking on foot, cannot pass one another without turning sideways. The houses in this quarter are hundreds of years old. Small jealous casements, heavily barred with iron, admit a little light and air into their dark interiors, but no window is seen directly facing another on the opposite side of the way, for an inmate of a house, looking then from his window, would gaze as it were across the mere passage within a house, and perchance see the women of his brother Muslim bare-faced before his eyes.

I had thought that the Medînans built their houses thus closely adjoining because every inch of ground about the Prophet's tomb was of priceless value, for great is the blessing to him who may dwell there, say the Muslims. But upon making some enquiry into this matter I was told: "No! Not so, O hâjji! But that the people of El Medîna might protect themselves from the simûm: therefore built they their houses thus." In Mekka (God show her honour!), say the Medînans, "the heat is, wallah, intense, but in the days of summer the burning wind, es-simûm, is nigh to kill thee in the plain of El Medîna." It is for this, say they, that the houses of El Medîna are built close; for the hot wind, rushing like the blast of a furnace across the plain, sweeps over the flat roofs of the parched city, finding no gaps of wide streets to enter. The Muslims, creeping along their narrow ways, do not fear the terrible blast which goes shrieking over their house-tops. Neverthe-

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less, Ibn Turki, who in the Mosque daily after the noon prayer preached denunciations against the idolators and polytheists, said: "Of a truth the simûm comes with great violence upon El Medîna, but in the days of summer the heat in Mekka is more intense."

Seventy years ago the Turks cut the wide street, El 'Aynîya, and built shops along half its length, but to this day the waste ground which borders a part of it is not built upon, and only in the Hâjj season are the shops occupied.

In Mekka the simûm wind is broken by the mountain heights which ring the city about, and little wind may reach to the depths of that valley. Nevertheless, or it may be for this reason, Ibn Turki spoke truth: the summer heat in Mekka is greater than it is in El Medîna.

This ancient quarter of El Medîna is called Hârat el Bakîa, and one of its narrow streets is called Zugâg el Aghawât. Here the eunuch guardians of the Mosque have their dwellings.

The vegetable and livestock markets are held without the Bâb esh-Shûna, and the grain market without the Egyptian Gate. Between these two spots stands a straggling mass of ramshackle booths and huts, constructed with branches of trees, old wooden beams, tattered pieces of hair-cloth, and empty tins beaten flat. Here are sold tea, coffee, sugar, candles, tobacco, rice, and other articles of foodstuff. Other booths near the Egyptian Gate are stocked with household stuff, new and old. Arms and clothing, and all the things which the hâjjis require, are sold in Es-Sûk and in the first part of the Zugâg Mâlik ibn Anas, inside the Egyptian Gate. Under the arch of that gate sit the

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sellers of sandals, gaily coloured, but of poor quality. But Aamir knew one from Damascus, who now sojourned and made sandals in the quarter of Esh-Shahrîya. This man made me an excellent pair of strong soles with straps of soft leather.

El Medîna is supplied with good drinking water from the spring called 'Ayn ez-Zarga, which is near the village of Kuba, four miles to southward of the city. This water was the best I tasted in the Hijâz, with the single exception of that of 'Ayn Zubayda in Mekka. The water of 'Ayn ez-Zarga has a faintly brackish taste, which is absent from the Mekkan spring.

A subterranean conduit leads the water of 'Ayn ez-Zarga into the city, where it fills two large stone reservoirs which have been constructed at a depth of some ten or fifteen feet below the ground level. One of these tanks lies on the northern side of Es-Sûk, some sixty yards from the Mosque gate, Bâb es-Salâm. The other is in the Hârat el Bakîa, to eastward of the Mosque. The former is quite below ground and is reached by stone steps, while the approach to the latter is by way of a paved slope.

Nearly every house in El Medîna has a well inside it, or in its coutryard. There is a hole in each floor of the house, directly above the well, and it is so arranged by the builders that the hole is within a small room, lined with stone or cement, which is used as a bathing place. A pulley is fixed in the topmost ceiling of the house, above the well-shaft, and through this runs a rope to which a bucket is tied. The rope passes down to the well, and a person in any floor of the house may haul upon it and draw up the bucket full of water. This ground water is used for ablutions and household purposes; it is not usual to drink it. The water is found

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at a depth of from ten to twenty feet below the surface of the ground, and the supply is copious.

Mekka was a haram or sanctuary before the time of Muhammad. To her the Arab, when threatened with the vengeance of his enemy, might flee for sanctuary, and no man dare slay him there. El Medîna, on the other hand, or Yathrib as she was formerly called, did not become a haram until the Prophet commanded that so it should be. Said he: "Verily Abraham sanctified Mekka, and made supplication for her people; and verily I have made El Medîna sacred, even as Abraham sanctified Mekka."

There is some difference of opinion among the learned as to what is the extent of the haram territory of El Medîna, but the generally accepted view is that it is bounded on the east and west by the two harras or lava fields; on the north by Jebel Thowr, behind Ohod; and on the south by Jebel 'Ayr. These boundaries enclose a tract some ten miles long by two miles broad.

Said the Prophet: "Verily I have made a sanctuary of El Medîna, namely, of all that ground which lies between the two mountains—Thowr on the north, and 'Ayr on the south; that blood be not shed within her bounds, nor weapons carried with intent to kill; nor shall any tree be cut down save only for provender."

The three Imâms, Esh-Shâfi'i, Ibn Hanbal, and Mâlik, following these traditions, pronounce El Medîna to be a haram; but the fourth Imâm, Abu Hanîfa, citing certain other Traditions which show that trees were cut down and animals hunted there in the Prophet's lifetime, denies that she should possess that distinction.

The argument seems to turn on whether the trees had been planted by those who cut them down. Trees

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and plants which are cultivated for food and timber may be made use of, but wild plants are inviolate. Similarly, domestic animals may be slaughtered for food within the haram limits, but wild animals may not be killed, nor even hunted in bloodless sport.

Formerly, many students of religion resided in El Medîna; but most of these, together with their professors, had long since fled to more hospitable places. A few of them had steadfastly remained in the city throughout the siege, however, and now these sat daily before Ibn Turki in the Haram. One of them was a slender fair-skinned old man with a long white beard. For thirty years he had sat listening attentively to the professors in the Haram of El Medîna, but he had not yet completed his studies. He was a man of a gentle demeanour and refined manner, and with an air of urgent earnestness he came to his daily lesson. I never saw him unwind his turban nor take off his jubba in the Mosque, however hot the day. He always brought with him a large tome on jurisprudence, and whenever Ibn Turki made a point which appealed to his imagination, he would put on his spectacles and turn up the page to see what his favourite jurist had to say about it. But long before he could come at what he sought, Ibn Turki had passed on to other matters.

Ibn Turki was a small slight man of a lean and hungry aspect—a man who thought too much and fasted too much, with the result that he disliked his weaker brethren too much. His Bedouin clothes were always immaculately clean, and he usually carried a tooth-stick in his hand. He was by birth a Nejder, and at one time had been a merchant of considerable wealth in Cairo. After certain years spent in amassing merchants' profits, the course of his life had been

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suddenly changed by a call to the religious life. He had, so it was said, given away most of his possessions and money to the poor, and retired to El Medîna. In the Prophet's City he now preached daily. He was a puritan, but he could hardly be called a Wahnâbî because he did not follow exclusively the views of Ibn Abdul Wahnâb and the Imâm Ahmad ibn Hanbal, as the Wahnâbîs do. He was a man of wide learning, and on all questions he could, and did, repeat from memory the views of each one of the four imâms. He habitually wore a frowning and somewhat ill-tempered expression of countenance, but would occasionally unbend to exchange a humorous remark with a member of his audience. At such times he would smile with great charm, but briefly.

I used to sit in Ibn Turki's attentive circle on frequent days. He held his class in the cloister at the western side of the Mosque. Here he sat on the carpet with his back resting against a pillar, and his audience arranged themselves in a circle before him. Often he spoke with great scorn of the Syrians and Egyptians. Said he, bitterly, one day: "When they marry their daughters, they hire a maker of sweetmeats for ten days, fifteen days, to prepare sweetmeats of many sorts. They drape the walls of their bridal chambers with silk, which is unlawful. They put seats with cushions which, when they sit on them, go down a little. They hang mirrors on the walls. All this superfluity they have, but they will not so much as touch the clothing of a poor man, for fear that they might become infected with disease."

This tirade was impressive, for Ibn Turki spoke in the manner of one having authority. He had lived among the Egyptians. I was aroused from my train

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of thought, however, by a Bedouin who, having found room between me and my neighbour for one of his horny splay feet, promptly sat down between us—with his right knee in my ribs. Another Bedouin, his companion, seated himself behind us.

“All the blessing of the occasion is lost,” proceeded Ibn Turki, who was still dealing with marriage entertainments. “The angels have a strong dislike for chambers which are richly furnished, and they will not enter them. They love to go into a place of bare stone walls. So all the blessing is lost, brothers, and the place which the angels would have taken is left vacant to the devils, and the devils will not delay to go in.”

This was magnificent. Who would not forgo silk curtains and cushions which go down a little, in order that he might thereby ensure the presence of the angels at his wedding feast. But all this while the Bedouin sat with his knee in my ribs. Now Ibn Turki began to revile the shaykhs of religion, for, said he, it is their neglect of public instruction which allows the people to fall into unlawful practices. Warming to the attack he went on to accuse the shaykhs of many impious practices, finally asserting that for money they will give a man a passport to Paradise itself.

As this discourse proceeded, I observed that the Bedouin who sat at my left hand, with his knee in my ribs, was becoming every moment more restless. At Ibn Turki's final denunciation of the shaykhs, the sitters uttered shocked exclamations, and my Bedouin neighbour began to snivel and splutter, while tears coursed down his lined and unwashed face. At the same time he gave vent to sobbing exclamations of “Allah is Greatest! His praise and greatness! There is

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no god but The God!" Tearfully he mumbled, wiping his eyes with a corner of his soiled kefiya, while Ibn Turki continued to deliver his further discourse with growing concentration of manner.

I thought then to myself, without doubt this Bedouin is much interested and deeply moved by Ibn Turki's lecture; doubtless he will continue to sit, with his knee in my ribs, until the bitter end.

But no! In another moment his snivelling subsided and ceased, and looking at his hard face I saw that it was no longer contorted. His tears had ceased to flow, he no longer uttered broken exclamations. His fickle wits had fastened on some other attraction: he had visualised a finjân of coffee, perhaps, or a new kefiya, which he purposed to buy in the market-place. He took his stick from the ground behind him, removed his knee from among my ribs, touched his companion on the shoulder, and in another moment was walking away, between the long rows of columns, towards Bâb er-Rahma with the tears still wet on his face.

Another teacher in the Haram of El Medîna was an Egyptian, one Ahmad et-Tantâwi, who had long been resident in the city. This old man was tall and portly of stature, and was white-bearded. He taught the system of the Imâm esh-Shâfi'i, and was a great favourite of the Malays, all of whom are followers of that system. He lived in the Zugâg es-Samhûdi, near the Bâb el Mejîdi. Since the Wahhâbî occupation he had ceased to teach in the mosque, but a number of students were in the habit of congregating at his house. Asceticism formed no part of this old man's creed. On one occasion a member of his audience expressed disgust at Ibn Sa'ûd's use of motor-cars in Mekka. But the old shaykh replied: "Listen, O my son! The

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world and all that is in it is for thy use and thy enjoyment, given to thee by Allah."

"His praise and greatness!" cried the company.

"Eat good food!" continued Shaykh Ahmad. "Ride in a motor-car! Clothe thy body with fine garments! Take four women to wife! Only forget not Allah, O my son, Who gives thee the good things of the world."

Again his hearers uttered exclamations of praise to God.

"Some of them say," continued the shaykh, "that the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace!), that the Prophet was an ascetic; that he wore old tattered garments and ate nought save dates and bread, and drank only water."

"True, O my sir," said one of the sitters. "Thus have we understood."

The old man caught him up before he had ceased to speak.

"No!" said he. "It was not so, but when the Arabs came in their thousands to submit to Allah and his Prophet here in El Medîna, they beheld him clothed in fine raiment, and his hair was anointed with sweet scent, and his face all shining like to the full moon, and . . ."

But here the voices of those who sat on the carpet before him burst forth with one accord, as though moved by an uncontrollable impulse, drowning the old man's discourse, and saying, "Allah bless him and show him mercy! O thou beloved of Allah, and our beloved! O best of mankind! O Prophet of Allah!" And in the midst of them the old shaykh sat on as one inspired, carried away, as they all were, by enthusiastic devotion to the Prophet, by whose agency Allah had

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guided the Muslimîn into the road which leads to Paradise. His beaming countenance shone, smooth now and flushed like that of a boy.

The Arab historians say that Yathrib was founded by 'Amlak, a son of Shem, whose tribe is known as El 'Amâlika. In the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the 'Amâlika were driven out by the Israelites, who remained in power at Yathrib until the bursting of the great dam at Marib in the Yemen. This disaster resulted in the dispersal of the Yemenite Arab tribes into distant parts of Arabia. The tribe of Bani 'Amr marched northward and settled in Yathrib, where they eventually overpowered the Jews who still dwelt there.

Subsequently the descendants of 'Amr became separated into two tribes, the 'Aus and the Khazraj, which were antagonistic to one another. Much strife occurred between these two tribes, in which the 'Aus ultimately gained the upper hand. Muhammad, however, upon his arrival in Yathrib, in 622 A.D., composed their differences.

After the coming of the Prophet the name Yathrib appears to have been no longer used, that of El Medîna being substituted for it.

When Muhammad fled from his persecutors in Mekka, he alighted from his camel at the village of Kuba, some four miles from El Medîna. There he remained for some days. He then proceeded among a concourse of rejoicing Muslims to El Medîna, and as he entered the city the people came out of their houses to meet him. They gathered about his camel with eager salutations, each striving for the honour of entertaining him, and crying: "Alight at my house, O Prophet of Allah!" And as he passed slowly along with the thronging crowd, all aflame with the Semitic

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enthusiasm for the man of God, the Prophet repeatedly said, "Make way for my nâga, for verily she is under divine command; wherever she couches, in that place will I alight."

At last they came to the place where the Great Mosque now stands, and there the nâga couched, with her rider still on her back. Before the Prophet could dismount, however, she rose again, and pacing a few yards further, once more knelt down, this time before the house of one Abu Ayyûb, thenceforth known as El Ansâri—the Helper. The house of Abu Ayyûb el Ansâri still stands at a few yards' distance from the south-eastern corner of the Mosque. Here the Prophet dwelt for seven months. During that time he built his mosque on the spot where his camel had first couched. The place was formerly a drying ground for dates, belonging to two orphans. These poor youths wished to give their property to Muhammad without recompense, but the Prophet insisted on making payment.

Muhammad's mosque was a simple walled enclosure measuring 120 feet by 100 feet. The foundations of the walls were built of stone, and the superstructure of mud bricks. The mihrâb was made in the northern wall, for the kibra* of Islam, at that time, was Jerusalem. A cloister was constructed at the mihrâb end, trunks of palm trees being used as pillars, and the roof made of palm fronds. The gates, three in number, were placed in the southern, the eastern, and the western walls.

* The kibra is the point towards which all turn their faces when repeating prayers. The Islamic kibra was changed from Jerusalem to Mekka in the second year of the Flight, in obedience to a new revelation (vide Chapter *The Cow*).

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In course of time Muhammad built separate houses or chambers, for each of his wives on the space of ground between the Mosque and Abu Ayyûb's house. This ground was subsequently added to the Mosque; and the Prophet's tomb-chamber, which now stands several yards within the Mosque walls, was originally the house of his wife 'Aîsha. Muhammad died at noon on the twelfth day of the third month, Rabî el Awwal, in the year 11 A.H. (633 A.D.): the same day of the same month being the generally accepted date of his birth in the year 570 A.D.

XXXII

THE HARAM OF EL MEDÎNA

DOWN the market street, Es-Sûk, came a tall strong negro dressed in a white Bedouin thawb with long flowing sleeves. About his waist was a belt full of rifle cartridges. With his great black left hand he grasped the sparse grey beard and the ends of the kefiya of a diminutive Bedouin. The latter wore a tattered hair-cloth mantle and the Wahhâbî head-dress of kefiya, and turban-cloth. These two passed quickly down the narrow way, as men engaged upon some urgent business. The black man wore a stern expression of countenance, but I thought I saw a glint of anxiety in his eye as he occasionally shot a glance to right or left. The little old Bedouin, his prisoner, limped as he walked, for one of his feet was deformed. His scowling glance was directed straight before him: he looked neither to right nor to left. Neither of these two spoke. A mob of Medînan youths pressed at their heels.

I was sitting with Aamir on the counter before his shop. Seated with us was the one-eyed youth, Saad. As the crowd went by, Aamir called to one who followed with them saying, " O Abu Ali, do us the favour! "

Abu Ali approached, a tall youth wearing a white turban.

" What is this? What has happened? " asked Aamir. " That one is a slave of Ibn Subhân:* what is he doing? "

* Ibrâhîm Sâlim ibn Subhân, governor of El Medîna at that time. He was a native of Northern Nejd, and a man of liberal

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"Ay yes, O my uncle," said Abu Ali, "and the one in his hand was a Bedouin of the Mudayyina, who yesterday saw one smoking tobacco, and he called him a bibber of that which intoxicates.* Then he who was smoking tobacco made complaint to Ibn Subhân, and Ibn Subhân commanded his slave to drag the Bedouin through the streets of the city by his beard, and after that to thrash him with a jerîd."†

"There is no power and no strength but in Allah!" said Aamir in a satisfied tone of voice. He added: "He was holding his beard in his right hand."

"With his left hand," I said.

This assurance appeared to increase the satisfaction of those who heard it. The left hand is used for all unclean purposes. This, then, was a great indignity, that a man's beard should be grasped in the left hand of another. Here was a heaping-up of degradations, for to take hold of the beard of a man with hostile intent is alone an outrage. To this was added the fact that the left hand had been employed. But, greatest indignity of all, the left hand was the left hand of a slave.

Abu Ali sat down with us on the counter.

"It seems that some of the Bedouins are pious folk," I said to Aamir.

"Why? Do you think them pious?" he asked.

"I do not know," I said. "But I was sitting among Ibn Turki's row of students, listening to his discourse mind. Whether the latter quality was the cause of his being removed from his office by Ibn Sa'ûd or not, I am unable to say. However that may be, he was supplanted a few weeks later, after the visit of the Wahnâbite Câdi to El Medîna.

* Khammâr: used colloquially to indicate a drunkard. An outrageous insult to a Muslim.

† The stick of a palm frond.

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the other day, when a Bedouin who was sitting next to me began to cry. Ibn Turki said there were men in the world calling themselves shaykhs who, for money, would give one a paper which, they said, would admit him to The Garden. When the Bedouin heard that impiety he was so moved that the tears ran down his cheeks."

They laughed—Aamir and Abu Ali and one-eyed Saad.

"Listen, Hâjj Ahmad!" said Aamir. "I will tell you a story which I heard."

An Egyptian had approached and was examining a turban-cloth which hung above the counter, but hearing Aamir's words, he sat down with us to hear the tale.

"In a certain village near El Medīna there was a shaykh," said Aamir. "He used to teach a class of students in the Mosque. One day a Bedouin came and sat down among the students. After a little while, as the shaykh proceeded with his lecture, the Bedouin began to weep. Then said the shaykh to him: 'Why do you cry, O my brother?'

"Said the Bedouin, 'I had a goat, a magnificent goat, and it had a fine long beard. Then, one day, it was spoiled from me in a raid, and I saw it not again after that, ever.'

"'But if you had been attending to me,' said the shaykh, 'you would not have thought of your goat.'

"'Wallah, O my uncle,' said the Bedouin. 'It was through attending to you that I thought of my goat. When I saw your long beard wagging while you discoursed, then I saw my goat chewing the cud, as it were with my eye.'

"Then the shaykh was angry, but the Bedouin

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howled the more and cried, 'Ah, miskîn! vanished, the goat.' "

We laughed, and Aamir said to me: "But it is possible that the Bedouin whom you saw with Ibn Turki was a pious man, but pious Bedouins are few, and Allah knows best."

The conversation turning on the siege of El Medîna, I asked them how they had obtained food when the caravans no longer came from Yanbua and from the East.

Said Aamir: "Provision came to us from Allah. I tell thee, Hâjj Ahmad, there are forty saints dwelling in this street, between Bâb es-Salâm and the Egyptian Gate. Allah would never leave them to starve. In the Traditions it says: 'We will give to the people of El Medîna provision from here and from there and from the Garden of Eden.' "

Said Abu Ali: "Formerly there was a Pasha of the Turks who heard that saying, but he did not believe it. He determined to make plain that it was a lie. So one day he ordered all the gates of El Medîna to be locked, as is done on the day of the congregational prayer.* This was done, and the keys were given to the Pasha. The next day he rode through the Manâkha and he saw a caravan unloading sacks of grain. But the gates were still locked. Then the Pasha spoke to the camel-man, saying: 'Whence came this kâfila?'

"Said the camel-drivers: 'From here and from there and from the Garden of Eden,' and they said nothing but that.

"After that," concluded Abu Ali, "the Pasha

* During the Friday midday prayer in walled cities it is commanded that the city gates be locked, so that the guard may join in the prayer.

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believed that Allah provides for the people of El Medîna, though they know not the manner of it."

Such tales are commonly believed and repeated by the Arabs with all the confidence of men proving a proposition from Euclid.

"There are forty saints in this street," said Aamir. "They have a shaykh, and he is the forty-first. We do not know who they are, but Allah knows."

"You know none of them?" asked the Egyptian. "In Egypt they know a saint by reason of his performing supernatural acts."

"There are people who know them," said he, "but I myself know them not. You can hear your secret thoughts being talked about in the streets of El Medîna though you have never mentioned them to any person and never spoken aloud to yourself."

"Strange!" I said.

"Strange, of a truth!" said Abu Ali. "And this happens in El Medîna alone of all the cities in the world."

Aamir and I rose to go to the Haram, as the Prophet's Mosque is called by the people of El Medîna. As we passed down the street, one overtook us, coming from the direction of the Egyptian Gate.

"Did you not see the slaves of Ibn Subhân thrashing the cursed Bedouin, Uncle Aamir?" asked this man.

"No, wallah!" said Aamir. "What happened?"

"They thrashed him with jerîds," said the other. "After the slaves had dragged him round the streets of the town, they threw him on the ground in the Manâkha and thrashed him with jerîds. There were two slaves thrashing him, and they broke fifty jerîds on his body; and he was still lying on the ground when I left the place."

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"The command of Allah!" said Aamir.

My companion and I proceeded on our way to the Mosque. Entering the Bâb es-Salâm, we passed along the southern wall until we came to a little iron-barred window opposite the Hujra. This window disclosed a small garden beyond. This, said my companion, is the Garden of Umar ibn El Khattâb, which has been preserved for thirteen hundred years. A small door in the Mosque wall gave admittance to the garden, but we found it locked. Passing round the Hujra, however, we left the Mosque by the Bâb Jibrîl and, turning to the right, came to a doorway in a stone wall. Entering this we found ourselves in a small chamber containing a fountain of clear water. Beyond it lay Umar's Garden.

The guardian of the place handed us a vessel of water, inviting us to drink for the sake of the blessing, and then conducted us into the garden. The place was less than thirty yards square, and in it grew five or six stunted date-palms and a small patch of birsîm. A number of wooden planks and ladders lay at one side, and in a corner were some great iron cooking-pots. The latter are public property, and are taken and used by anybody who designs to prepare a feast in his house. At the northern side of the garden rose the lofty wall of the Mosque, while the western and southern sides were bounded by the blank walls of houses. The chamber of the doorway was built into a wall which formed the eastern boundary of the garden.

Having finished our inspection of this place we pursued our way to the public library of 'Arif Hikmat, which lies adjacent to it. The library is housed in a building composed of two domed rooms. It stands in a square court in which a number of trees and shrubs

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are growing. The whole is enclosed by a high stone wall in which is a large gate of ornamental ironwork. The interior of the building was well appointed, the shelves, tables, and benches being of polished mahogany, and the floors covered with fine carpets. The books were all numbered, and might not be taken away from the building. On a table stood a large terrestrial globe: 'Arif Hikmat, who was Shaykh El Islâm* in Stambûl, had evidently believed that the earth is a sphere. Several old men in skull caps sat reading on the carpets near the windows, their turbans placed carefully on a bench or on the window sill near them.

The librarian and his assistant, both of whom were Turks, appeared to know where any given book was to be found. I asked for a volume of Fakhr er-Râzi's Commentary on the Korân, and the assistant librarian at once took it from a shelf and handed it to me with the care of one who handles a treasure.

This library was endowed by its founder, Shaykh 'Arif Hikmat, and the assistant librarian told me with an air of satisfaction that "we do not eat out of the hand of the king, neither from the hand of El Husayn, nor from the hand of Ibn Sa'ûd. Our provision comes from Stambûl, from the waqf bequeathed by the Shaykh. Therefore it is of no account to us who is king or who is sultân; we render praise to God, Who is Lord of All."

El Medîna had long been famous for its libraries. Had been, for after the Wahnâbî onset many valuable collections of books disappeared, no one knew whither. Sultân Mahmûd's library, adjoining Bâb es-Salâm,

* The chief of the religious shaykhs—the final authority in matters of religion.

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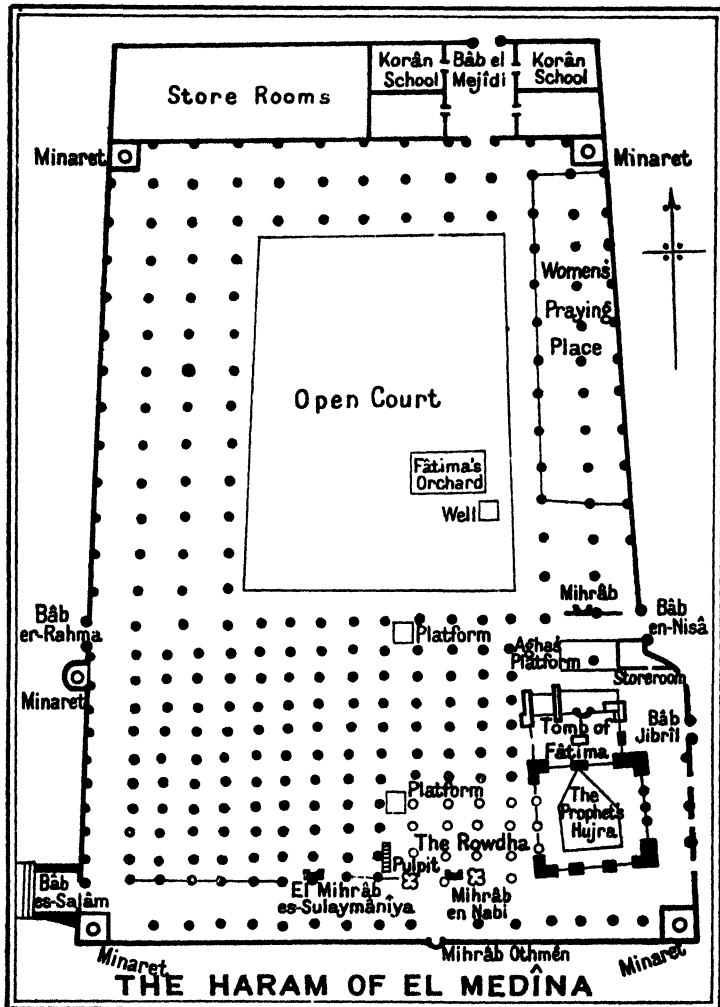
was said to be intact; but it was now closed, and Aamir was unsuccessful in his efforts to find the custodian of the key.

The famous libraries of Bashîr Agha, and those in the schools of Esh-Shifâ, of the Sultân Abdul Hamîd, and of Umar Effendi were said to be no longer in existence. Some said that most of the books had been stolen when the inhabitants of the city fled; others said the Wahhâbîs had burnt them; and others again said that many of them had been sold by those who should have guarded them. In the Great Mosque there are about a hundred large Korâns placed on shelves beside the Prophet's mihrâb. Most of these are beautifully written, and elaborately embellished with illuminations of gold, red, blue, and other colours. A few of them are printed copies. These volumes have been presented to the Mosque at various times for the use of visitors.

The Great Mosque, or Haram, of El Medîna is built like the Haram of Mekka, in the form of an open quadrangle. Its length, from north to south, is some 380 feet. In breadth it varies considerably, as the two long walls converge upon one another as they proceed northward. At its southern end it is some 280 feet broad and at its northern end 220 feet. Its walls are some thirty feet in height.

The Mosque is roofed at its southern end for more than a third part of its length, the roof being supported by twelve rows of massive cylindrical columns. On the eastern side there is also a cloister formed by two rows of columns, and a row of pilasters adjoining the wall. This space is enclosed by a wooden screen and forms the praying-place of the women.

The cloister on the western side of the Mosque is



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formed by three rows of columns and a row of pilasters. This is the favourite place for shaykhs to deliver their lectures between the hours of prayer.

A wall, built across the Haram at a distance of some forty feet from its northern end, marks the limit on that side of the Mosque proper. The space between this inner wall and the outer or main wall of the Mosque is occupied eastward by four chambers used as a Korān school, and westward by store-rooms for lamp-oil, brooms, ladders, and other gear of the Mosque servants. Between these two blocks of chambers are situated several private rooms belonging to the aghas. One of these is used by them as a place of ablution.

The cloister on the northern side of the Mosque is formed by two rows of columns, and a row of pilasters against the inner wall.

The total number of columns, including the square pillars of the Prophet's Hujra and the pilasters, is about 320. They are painted a dull red brown, and stand cemented into massive circular bases of brass.

The roof of the cloisters is constructed in the form of a succession of little domes, the greater number of which are whitened on the under side, as all are on the outside. Underneath the arches on all sides of the Mosque the ground is paved with slabs of white marble. Over this pavement great squares of carpet are spread. The open central court is unpaved; it is covered with a gravel of crushed red sandstone.

The columns of the Rowdha are sixteen in number, fourteen of which are cylindrical. The remaining two, which stand one on either side of the Prophet's Mihrab take the form of four cylindrical shafts massed together. The domes over the Rowdha are somewhat more lofty

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than those in the other parts of the Mosque, and their under surfaces are adorned with flowery painted designs. Most of them also contain windows of coloured glass.

Between the columns are horizontal rods on which lamps are hung by means of chains. There are a few electric lights in the Haram, but the oil lamps greatly outnumber these.

The Prophet's Hujra stands in the south-eastern corner of the Mosque, immediately eastward of the Rowdha. It is situated at a distance of twenty-five or thirty feet from the southern wall, and half that distance from the eastern wall. It consists of two enclosures, one within the other. The outer enclosure is some forty-five feet square, and the screen of ornamental ironwork by which it is bounded is supported by square stone pillars. This screen is said to rest upon a subterranean wall of solid metal, being the same which was made by order of the Sultân Nûr ed-Dîn. It was made by digging a trench twenty feet deep and filling it with molten lead and copper.

Within the outer enclosure there is a five-sided chamber, the walls of which are some twenty feet in height. Three of its sides—the eastern, the southern, and the western—are disposed as sides of a square, while the remaining two meet in an acute angle at the centre of the northern side of the outer enclosure. This inner chamber stands directly underneath the green dome. It is always completely covered by a black pall. Within it lie the tombs of Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and Umar, and the empty sepulchre.

Adjoining the Prophet's Hujra on the northern side is a smaller enclosure, measuring forty feet by twenty feet, in which is the reputed tomb of Fâtima.

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There are gates in the ironwork screen on each side of the Prophet's Hujra, but the only means of entrance which is commonly used is the gate in the northern side of Fâtima's tomb-chamber. Passing through this, the visitor comes to another gate in the ironwork partition which separates the two tomb-chambers. This gate gives access to the Prophet's Hujra.

To northward of Fâtima's enclosure, and separated from it by a space some ten feet wide, is a raised platform. In this place several of the aghas may usually be seen. They also invite hâjjis of distinction to sit and perform their prayers there. The platform has the advantage, in the eyes of many, of being so placed that the worshipper stationed there, and facing Mekka, also faces the Prophet's tomb. To eastward of the aghas' platform there is a store room.

In the open court of the Mosque there is a small garden enclosed within an iron railing. It measures some twenty feet by thirty feet, and is known as Fâtima's Orchard. Three stunted palm-trees, a small sidr tree, and a few shrubs grow in it. Near it is a well of sweet water, sometimes called the Prophet's Well, but more usually referred to as the Zemzem of El Medîna.

There are five public gates in the Medînan Haram. In the western wall are Bâb es-Salâm, and Bâb er-Rahma. Through the latter the dead are borne into the Mosque to be prayed over before burial. In the northern wall is Bâb el Mejîdi, also called Bâb et-Tawassul. In the eastern wall are the two gates Bâb en-Nisâ—the Women's Gate—being the nearest gate to the women's praying-place, and Bâb Jibrîl. Through the last the dead are borne out to the cemetery El Bakîa.

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In addition to these gates there is a door in the northern wall, which leads into one of the store-rooms, but this is kept shut. In the southern wall there is another small door which gives access to Umar's Garden. This too is kept shut unless a visitor pays the keeper of the key to open it, in order that he may pass through by the way which Umar used to go. Other small doors give access to the minarets.

At each corner of the Mosque there is a lofty spire: that at the south-eastern corner is of a beautiful Saracenic design, with stalactic carving under the galleries; the other three taper smoothly to a point in the Turkish style, and are as ugly as huge waxen candles, which they resemble. A fifth minaret, of a meaner aspect, stands adjacent to Bâb er-Rahma.

There are a number of mihrâbs situated in various parts of the Mosque. These have historical associations, and many of the Muslims, for reasons of personal preference, say their prayers before one of them rather than before any of the others. Sometimes a man performs his prayers before each one of them during a day or during a week. The hâjjis are usually directed by the muzawwirs to pray two prostrations before each. Needless to relate, the favourite one is the Prophet's Mihrâb.

These mihrâbs, then, together with the space immediately in front of them, form as it were chapels in the Mosque. Their names and positions are as follow: 1, Mihrâben-Nabi, in the Rowdha; 2, Mihrâb Othmân, in the east centre of the southern wall; 3, El Mihrâb es-Sulaymânîya, built in the ninth century of the Hijra, and cased with marble by the Turkish Sultân Sulaymân the Magnificent in the tenth century: this mihrâb is in line with that of the Prophet, and is

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situated to westward of it; 4, Mihrâb el Mutahajjad, on the northern side of Fâtima's tomb-chamber: there is a raised platform before this mihrâb, and the place is said to be that in which the Prophet performed supererogatory prayers at night. Within Fâtima's tomb-chamber there is another mihrâb, but this is not ordinarily accessible; 5, Mihrâb Bâb en-Nisâ, immediately within the Women's Gate.*

There are four windows in the Mosque walls: three of these are opposite the Hujra, in the eastern wall between Bâb Jebrîl and the south-eastern corner of the Mosque; the fourth is that which opens into Umar's Garden.

Two small square platforms, raised seven feet from the ground, stand one behind the other in the southern colonnade. These are the standing-places of the muballighs whose duty is to repeat the words of the imâm.

The Mosque has been rebuilt and increased in size by a succession of Arab and Turkish sultâns. It was almost entirely rebuilt as it now stands, by order of the Turkish Sultân Abdul Majîd, at a cost of seven hundred thousand pounds. One of the eunuchs, by name Abdul Wâhid Agha, named this sum in my presence, but I am convinced it must include the cost of the valuable jewels which Abdul Majîd is known to have deposited in the Hujra; failing that, the embezzlements of the officers in charge of the work must have been considerably above the regular scale. Stone was brought from the Wâdi-l'Agîg, to westward of the city, and in order to facilitate its transportation to the Mosque

* The Mekkan Haram is the only mosque which has no mihrâb. There the worshippers see the Kibla, that is the Kaaba, before their eyes.

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precincts, the breach El 'Aynîya was made in the city wall. By this means carts were used for bringing in the stone columns and blocks which were too heavy to be carried by camels. The work took twelve years to complete (1848-1860), and during the whole of that time the five daily prayers were held in the Mosque without interruption. Each part of the building which was dismantled was rebuilt before another part was touched by the builders. The only parts which were left undisturbed were the Prophet's Hujra, and parts of the northern and western walls. The houses which formerly clustered about the walls of the Mosque were cleared away from all sides save the southern, and a pavement of stone was laid along the foot of the walls.

In normal circumstances the Mosque servants at El Medîna are more numerous than those at Mekka. The aghas, preachers, imâms, lecturers, muaddins, overseers, sweepers, doorkeepers, water-carriers, lamp cleaners, and others employed in the Haram, number more than a thousand men. Each receives a stipend from the waqfs, or endowment funds, of the Mosque; and in the Pilgrimage season they glean small presents from the hâjjis. Most of these men have some trade or business of their own, which the lightness of their duties in the Mosque leaves them ample time to practise.

The chief of this legion of helpers is the Shaykh el Haram, who is assisted by a deputy (nâib). The treasurer of the Mosque at the time of my visit was one of the eunuchs, but Aamir said "he has no work to do, for no money comes now—neither from Stambûl nor from anywhere else." In Turkish times, liberal salaries were sent from Constantinople for everyone employed in the Mosque service. When King Husayn had driven the Turks out of the Hijâz, he himself was

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for some charity in which he has no particular interest. It is commonly believed that the Aghas possess great riches which are secreted in their dark houses adjoining Bâb Jibrîl.

The corps of Aghas in El Medîna formerly numbered fifty. I doubt whether there were more than thirty of them employed in the Mosque at the time of which I write; but there was evidently no intention of allowing them to become extinct, as they had a number of little black boys in their houses who must have been recently purchased by or presented to them. These youths spent their time in study and in serving the elders, preparing to enter the Mosque service when they should arrive at years of discretion.

The employment of eunuchs in the Haram of El Medîna was instituted by the Sultân Salâh ed-Dîn el Ayyûbi—Saladin of the Crusaders.

XXXIII

PLACES OF VISITATION NEAR EL MEDÎNA

AAMIR was in daily expectation of becoming a father. Hitherto that blessing had not been vouchsafed to him. One day his wife became unwell, but without the expected result. "I must prepare an alms, and divide it among the poor," said he. Therefore we went that day to the market-place without the gate Bâb esh-Shûna, where livestock and vegetables are sold. Arrived there, Aamir passed to and fro among the booths and the animals, and felt the ribs of many lank dollop-tailed sheep. Occasionally he cast his eye on a plump goat: goats were cheaper, but the importance of the occasion indicated the advisability of propitiating Providence with a sheep. At last he bought a ram of unappetising aspect, and tied it bleating to a post. On our return to the house he sent two urchins to bring the animal home. This they did with great glee, and stalled it in a dungeon full of lumber, behind the shop. On the next day the animal was duly sacrificed, and its flesh distributed among the poor. Nevertheless, the paternity of Aamir remained unaccomplished.

Said he to me: "To-morrow, in shâ Allah, let us visit our Lord Hamza, and there I will distribute alms."

Accordingly, on the morrow, soon after the dawn prayer, we hired a cubic wooden box, measuring little more than four feet in each dimension and mounted on wheels, and left the city by the Syrian Gate. Our

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carriage, which was without springs, was drawn by a little Arab horse of a decrepit appearance. The driver sat on the shafts, and Aamir and I sat on two little shelves inside.

Passing under the hill Jebel Sal'a, we came to a tiny building, the dome of which had not received the attention of the Wahhâbis. This, said Aamir, was the Kubbat es-Sabk, which marks the spot where Muhammad's companions raced their horses. Soon afterwards we stopped in order to perform two prostrations in a little mosque at the right-hand side of the way. This building is said to mark the place where Muhammad assumed his coat of mail on the day of Ohod, though the historians assert that he performed that act in his house within the city. Proceeding further, we came to the extensive walled compound of the wireless telegraph, and shortly afterwards we passed through the gate in El Husayn's wall. Before us the track descended beside plantations of palm trees, and, crossing the gravelly bed of a watercourse, it led to a village. Close to the western end of this village stood a square stone building surmounted by a white dome and a minaret. This was the tomb mosque of the Prophet's uncle, Hamza. Less than half a mile behind the mosque and the village rose a great mountain of red granite—Jebel Ohod. This mass of bare rock extended five or six miles in an easterly direction, and along its base ran a wide, shallow watercourse. On the southern bank of the latter, walled plantations of date palms extended for a distance of two or three miles eastward.

Behind Jebel Ohod, and to westward of it, the palms of El 'Uyun glittered and faded by turns in the heat haze.

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Arrived at the watercourse, we dismounted from the cart and climbed the further slope on foot. The village was almost deserted. Aamir told me that it is only populated during the Hajj months, when parties of pilgrims often hire the houses for a period of days. At other seasons the people of El Medĭna who own houses there occasionally make an excursion to them, accompanied by their friends, particularly on Hamza's birthday.

Leaving our sandals in the care of an old man of unkempt appearance who sat at the doorway, we entered Hamza's Mosque. From the covered porch we passed into a small unroofed court, in the middle of which was the tomb of one of the less famous martyrs of Ohod. Turning then to the left, we came to a large chamber with a domed roof. Here we performed our two prostrations in salutation of the mosque. The walls of this chamber were decorated with a painted frieze, and on the floor were rush mats. There was a lofty archway in the wall opposite to that in which was the mihrâb. This archway, however, was blocked up with a wall of rough pieces of stone and mud, to a height of eight or nine feet. On the further side of this partition we could see the upper part of a square chamber which was open to the sky, where once had been a domed roof.

"Come!" said my companion. "Let us visit the tomb."

The inner archway being now blocked up, we were obliged to leave the mosque and pass round the walls to its western side. Here we found that the wall of the building had been torn down, so that the tomb-chamber, while no longer communicating with the mosque, by reason of the wall built in the archway,

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was open to the jackal and the kite and to whatever else might desire to enter.

"I ask pardon of Allah!" exclaimed Aamir, as he saw this distressing sight.

On a bench near the breach sat three men, clothed in the Medînan dress. These spoke together in murmuring tones.

As we approached, I saw that in the centre of the chamber there was a tomb, covered with a green pall and surrounded by high iron railings. This was the tomb of Hamza. A smaller catafalque before it marked the burial-place of Abdulla bin Jahsh.

We saluted the sitters on the bench, and one of them rose to conduct us into the tomb-chamber.

"When happened this demolition?" I asked our guide.

He named the day: it was less than a week before. "By command of the Câdî," he added.

"By command of Ibn Belayhid?" I said.

"Ay, yes," said he, "the Câdî of the Mudayyina."

I had heard that Abdulla ibn Belayhid had arrived in El Medîna, though I had not chanced to see him. His journey was the outcome of Ibn Sa'ûd's long-deferred partial yielding to the Wahhâbî 'ulemâ, who had continually pressed him to destroy the tombs throughout the Hijâz, and particularly those at El Medîna. I had heard that Ibn Belayhid had demanded of the aghas to be admitted to the Prophet's Hujra at any hour in which he might chose to visit it; that he had entered the tomb-chamber at midnight, merely to examine it; that he was itching to have the Green Dome demolished, and the tomb also.

Certain it is that the Wahhâbîs would have long since thrown down the Dome, and rebuilt the Haram

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so that it did not enclose the Prophet's tomb, if their leaders had not been deterred by the caution of the statesman more than they were urged by the zeal of the religious fanatic.

To lay violent hands on the Prophet's tomb is too dangerous a proceeding: such an act could hardly fail to arouse the entire Islamic world to drive its perpetrators out of the Holy Land. Yet, in truth, the Prophet himself directed that his tomb should be made inconspicuous.

Ibn Belayhid had come to El Medîna on a mission which could not be anything but delightful to a Wahhâbî. He was charged with the pious duty of superintending the destruction of all prominent tombs. His first difficulty was to find men who would consent to do such sacrilegious work. The Wahhâbîs in El Medîna were very few, for Ibn Sa'ûd had withdrawn them from that city before its actual surrender. As for the Mudayyina themselves, they had no desire to visit a place the most revered object in which was the tomb of a man, unless it were for the purpose of making drastic alterations there, both architectural and ritualistic. Of actually doing these last they had been roundly accused in the newspapers of Egypt, Syria, and India, and Ibn Sa'ûd had been obliged to despatch many telegrams from Jidda to the four quarters of the Islamic world, assuring the Muslimîn that the Green Dome which sheltered the Prophet's tomb was intact, and that he pledged the lives and possessions of himself and his family that it should remain so, by the power of Allah.

Assisted by the Governor of the city and his minions, Ibn Belayhid had hired the services of a number of the Nakhawila, a despised community of peasant Arabs

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who dwell in the palm groves without the city walls. These people are followers of the Shîa doctrine, and they are not allowed to dwell within the city. They may come in by day, however, and numbers of them sell vegetables in the open space near Bâb es-Salâm; but before sunset they are obliged to leave the town. The usual reason given for this by the Medînans is that they are incorrigible thieves, but there is also the feeling that they are a pollution to the Prophet's city. They are absolutely prohibited from entering the Haram, but it was the custom of the Government until recently to compel them to supply a guard about the Mosque to drive away the dogs. Temporary marriage, *mut'a*, which is disallowed by Sunni Islâm, is practised among them. Under this system the period of time during which the marriage is to last must be stated, and upon its expiration the parties must either re-marry, or separate. Were they to continue to live together without re-marriage they would be guilty of adultery. Under this form of marriage the children belong to their mother. Let it be repeated that *mut'a* marriage is illegal in orthodox Islamic law.

I was informed by a neighbour of Aamir in the Sûk that the Nakhawila hire out to the Persian pilgrims—who are Shî'is, like themselves—their houses with all that they contain, including their wives and daughters. The Nakhawila,* say the Medînans, will do anything for money: so now, directed by the Câdî, they demolished the tombs of the Muslimîn.

Everybody whom we met in the Mosque of Hamza spoke in hushed tones, as though fearful of being over-

* It may be that the Nakhawila are descended from those Arabs professing the Shî'ite doctrine, who were very numerous in El Medîna in the first century of the Hijra.

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heard by Wahhâbîte spies. The Cādî had refused the request of the guardians of the tomb to be allowed to make a door in the breach, so that the latter might be closed, and they were now obliged to guard the place in turn by day and night, so as to prevent dogs and other unclean beasts from entering it.

The Battle of Ohod was fought on the 15th Shawal in the year 3 of the Hijra (A.D. 625). Three thousand unbelievers of Mekka, commanded by Abu Sufyân, marched against El Medîna. Accompanying them were their women, whom they had brought with them to be a handicap and deterrent against their fleeing from the Muslims.

While the Muslims who dwelt among the palm trees came rallying into the city, Muhammad and his companions sat in council, debating whether they should go forth and give battle on the plain, or await the onset of the Mekkans where they were. Muhammad's own view was that they should fortify themselves in the city, and if the unbelievers came against them they would kill them at the entering in of the narrow streets, while the women assisted by throwing missiles from the roofs.

A party of the Prophet's companions, however, urged him to lead them against the enemy. Thereupon he rose and donned his coat of mail, while his companions rallied the rank and file. Then the Muslims, numbering one thousand men, sallied forth from the city, with Muhammad at their head.

The opposing forces met at the foot of Ohod, on the elevated ground called 'Aynayn, which forms the northern bank of the watercourse at that point. Both sides fought with great tenacity, but the Mekkans were driven back towards their women. Seeing this, a party

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of the Muslims, disobeying the orders of Muhammad, left their own position and went in pursuit of the foe, crying, "To the spoil! To the spoil!" This nearly brought disaster on the Prophet and his followers; for the horsemen of their enemies managed to reach a position behind them, whence they closed upon them from the rear, killing seventy of their number. But the Prophet and his followers would not be overcome. The thought which unfear'd their souls as they advanced against their foes was, that within the shadow of their thirsting swords lay Paradise. "I will be the first to smell the sweet odours of Paradise," cried Anas ibn En-Nadhar, and charging among the enemy he fought until he was killed. The Prophet mortally wounded one Abu Khalaf, and was himself wounded in the cheek and the lower lip, one of his teeth being smashed. Hamza and over seventy others were slain, but eventually the Muslims fought their opponents to a standstill, when the surviving Mekkans withdrew with their women.

Having repeated sundry prayers as directed by our guide, and having distributed small sums of money to several beggars who crouched near Hamza's tomb, we left the Mosque and went to visit the stony mounds which mark the graves of some of the other martyrs of Ohod. These are enclosed by a low stone wall. Here we repeated further litanies with our guide.

Behind the Mosque lay the ruins of a little domed building, which is said to stand upon the spot where Muhammad's tooth was broken in the battle. It is known as the Dome of the Tooth. Higher up the slope to eastward was another little mosque, marking the place where Hamza fell. The building now lay in ruins, having been torn down by the Wahhâbîs.

Throughout these visitations the muzawwir dis-

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pensed largesse with greater liberality than did the hâjji. Paternity, it would seem, is a blessing worth paying for. Nor was the good man yet done with almsgiving, for a bevy of laughing peasant girls who ran in the dust behind our cart as we returned to the city also received a gift for Allah's sake.

That night a son was born to Aamir.

I was sitting with him on the bench before his shop next morning, after the dawn prayer, when a thin youth of a wild and dishevelled appearance came pacing quickly down the street, going toward the Haram. As he came abreast of us the youth stopped suddenly, but he uttered no salutation.

"This is the house in which is the new-born child," said he, in the manner of one making a statement of fact. "Yes," he added, "there is a new-born child here."

"Praise be to Allah!" said Aamir, with quiet fervour.

"Give a piastre," commanded the dervish.

Aamir at once handed him a coin. He received it without looking at it. He was eyeing the house with an intent look.

"Allah make the child blessed to thee, and peace be upon thee!" he said, and so departed as swiftly as he had come.

The youth, Kâmil by name, was one who spent his time in wandering purposefully about the city on unknown errands, and in sitting or praying in the Haram. When he became tired he laid himself down and slept wherever he might be, on a bench in a coffee-house, in the dust of some quiet courtyard, in the porch of a mosque, or in the Haram. He had no other food than such as was given to him in charity; and he frequently entered, unbidden, a house where a feast

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was being held, and sat down to eat with the guests. Such an act was regarded as a favour by the master of the house, for this youth was "Kâmil, with whom is Allah." In Europe the poor youth would have been called rather "Mad Kâmil." I was told that he sometimes refused to accept money which was offered to him, and this was a sign that the money had been acquired by unlawful means.

"Tell me, how did he know there was a new-born child here?" I asked Aamir.

"Allah it was Who gave him the knowledge; no other," he replied.

One day I left the city alone on foot, in order to visit the mosque of Kuba. This building lies among plantations of palm, sidr, and pomegranate trees, some four miles to south-westward of the city. I took the precaution of leaving my jubba and waist-shawl behind, so as to carry as small a spoil as possible to any thieves who might accost me in the way.

My route lay from the Manâkha, up the watercourse to Bâb Kuba in the southern part of the outer wall. This gate stands on the left or south-western bank of the wâdi, and the wall is carried thence across the bed of the watercourse on arches, which latter are closed by strong iron bars.

Without that gate the track led across a plain of sandy clay. A few half-ruined houses were scattered along both sides of the way; and to westward the black slope of the harra rose gently above me. On the summit of this slope the Bâb el 'Anbarîya, and the dome and minarets of the Turkish mosque which stands beside it, showed clear-cut against the sky. Further westward, in the middle of the harra, stood a small square fort of Turkish construction.

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At some two miles distance from the city wall I came to the first of the palm groves. Here I overtook one who drove before him a donkey laden with empty pannier baskets. As he returned my salutation this man asked—Was it my intention to visit the Mesjid Kuba? He was a man of middle age, slight-bearded, and dressed in the townsman's old travelling clothes.

Upon enquiring as to his destination, I learnt that he would gather rutab (new dates) from a plantation near Kuba, which belonged to his family.

"What think you of El Medîna?" he asked presently.

"El Medîna, mâ shâ Allah, is a fine city," I said. "It pleases me much, but it appears that its inhabitants are very few."

"It was better in the past years," said he. "Wallah, better! El Medîna, in the days of the Turks, was teeming with people. They came to us from Syria, from Turkey, from Egypt, from India, from Bokhâra, from Morocco, and from every part of the world, and they dwelt among us round about the Prophet's Hujra. Then were we in great blessedness. For money was plentiful, and merchandise came to us from Damascus, and fruits also. Everyone had a bountiful provision. And praise to God Who gives provision to whom He will, and withholds from whom He will."

"Then what is the reason for this reversal of fortune?" I asked. "For cannot the palms and orchards of El Medîna suffice a great multitude; and is not water here abundant; and do not flocks and herds and samn come to you from the Eastern desert, and rice from El Hind?"

"But El Medîna was besieged," said he. "Twice she was besieged, and her orchards destroyed and her houses demolished. The people fled away. Have you

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not seen their houses?—in ruins now. When El Husayn rebelled against the Sultân they went forth the city in thousands, fleeing. They went to Damascus, to Yanbua, to Hâil, and I know not where. And when the Wahnâbîs came the remainder fled—all save a few.”

He went on to tell me of Fakhri Pasha’s measures to repel Husayn’s Arabs who laid siege to the city; of his patrols and his sorties, and his orders to the civil population. My companion understood method, and appreciated its value. His name was Abdul Majîd es-Sa’îdi, and his family were muzawwirs of the Indians.

I said: “One of my friends in Mekka, Sayyid Abdul Fattâh, desired me to enquire for a man from India; his name was Abdulla el Muslimâni. Do you know a man of that name?”

“I think not,” said Abdul Majîd. “What is his appearance?”

“He was a man of great age, and his beard was long and white. He used to sit in the Haram after the times of prayer, and he loved to listen to the chanting of the Korân,” I said.

“No, wallah, I know him not,” said he, “you said he was a Hindi?”

“He came from El Hind,” I said, “but it would seem that he was not of the Hindi nationality. He was a foreigner who sojourned in El Hind, and there he embraced the religion of Islâm. After that he came to El Medîna.”

“I have not heard of him,” said Abdul Majîd, “but I will ask concerning him.”

Of Sayyid Abdul Fattâh he said: “Formerly he was here. He has a house and garden beyond Kuba, but they are fallen to ruin.”

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Our ways separated before we reached the mosque of Kuba.

I subsequently met Abdul Majîd in the Haram on two occasions, but he had been unable to learn anything of Abdulla el Muslimâni. Whether Abdul Fattâh's Inkilîzi was really an Englishman or not I cannot say. If he was alive in El Medîna during my sojourn there, he must have been bedridden; for, had he been able to go to the Haram, I must have seen him at one time or another. There are many men of fair complexion in El Medîna, men of Turkish, Syrian, and Circassian descent. Among these I several times saw an old white-bearded man whom I thought might be the man I sought; but on enquiry I learnt that he was a Turk of considerable learning who had formerly taught Hanafi law in the Haram.

Some of the gardens close to the village of Kuba were still being tended, and these, I saw, were green with growing vegetables and clover. Further out on the plain, however, the fields were as smooth and bare as sand of the seashore left uncovered by the receding tide. The ground had long lain untilled, and rain and wind had reduced it to the state of the surrounding deserts. Along the edges of all the fields, however, grew palm, tamarisk, and sidr trees.

The mosque of Kuba is a square crenellated building surmounted by a minaret, standing on rising ground among the plantations. Scattered round about it are the hovels which form the village.

As I reached the mosque, a muaddin began to chant the adân for the sunset prayer. A number of water-jars stood beside the door, and dipping one of these into a stone water-tank, I performed ablutions and entered the mosque.

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The congregation, including the imâm and myself, numbered eight persons, three of whom were boys. Nobody sat long after prayers; there was no chanting of the Korân, no chatting together in the cool of the evening. These poverty-stricken wretches crept away sadly to their hovels. Only the imâm, seeing that I intended to look about the building, asked me to lock the door and take the key to him when I had finished. Then, having pointed out his house to me, he went away. It seemed that I had impoverished my appearance to some purpose.

The interior of the mosque was open to the sky, save for a narrow colonnade which surrounded the court. In the centre of the latter there was a stone water-tank, at one side of which stood a little dome raised on four stone pillars. This dome covers the spot on which Muhammad's camel knelt at the end of his flight from Mekka. On the opposite side of the water-tank there was a small square space of ground, enclosed by a short wooden fence, in which some green shrubs were growing.

When Muhammad came to El Medîna, fleeing from his enemies at Mekka, the Muslims of the former city went out with a joyful clamour to meet him. They surrounded his camel as he rode across the western harra, while he directed the animal towards the nearest collection of dwellings. This was Kuba; and here the Prophet alighted before the house of a grandson of the Arabian poet Amr el Kays, named Kalthûm. This Kalthûm possessed a threshing-floor, and on that spot the Prophet laid the foundations of the Mosque of Kuba—the first mosque ever built.

The Muslim divines are unanimous in the opinion that the Mesjid Kuba is that described in Chapter

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Repentance as being "a mosque founded upon piety from its first day."

Like all the other historical buildings of the Hijâz, the Mosque of Kuba has been many times rebuilt by successive khalîfas and sultâns. Its last rebuilding occurred nearly a hundred years ago, after the first Wahnâbî invasion.

To south-westward of the mosque there are two smaller buildings. These are known as the Mosque of Fâtima and the Mosque of 'Arafa. In the former Muhammad's daughter is fabled to have sat grinding barley; and from the site of the latter the Prophet is said to have clearly seen the plain of 'Arafa and the pilgrims performing the Hajj there. The domes of both buildings had been thrown down. This demolition was done by the ignorant zealots composing the Wahnâbî force which had besieged El Medîna. It is not to be laid to the Câdi's account. In the Wahnâbî view, however, a building in which supplication is habitually made to saints is as meet for destruction as though it sheltered a tomb. Even the Prophet's birthplace at Mekka had been destroyed; but that and similar acts of vandalism occurred before the arrival of Ibn Sa'ûd at Mekka.

To westward of the Mosque of Kuba, at a distance of twenty or thirty yards, lies the well Bir el Arîs. This well is forty feet deep. It is named after a Jew of El Medîna who owned it in the time of Muhammad. It is also known as the Well of the Spitting, for the Prophet is fabled to have expectorated into it, causing its waters, which had been brackish, to become sweet.

A third name of this well is the Well of the Seal, for the Khalîfa Othmân is said to have dropped Muhammad's ring into it by accident, whence it was never

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recovered. About the well there is a garden of fruit trees.

A conduit, or gutter, carries the water to a tank, and a second conduit brings water from another well close by. A youth of the village who conducted me to the several points of interest would have me observe this miracle—that one conduit contained sweet water, while the other contained brackish water, yet both streams were fed by wells a few yards from one another. The Prophet—God bless him and give him peace—said he, had spat into the one well, but the other had received no such attention.

I was told, however, by one learned in the Traditions, that the hadîth which records this alleged act of Muhammad is not attested by the more reliable compilers of collections of Traditions. It is probably an invention of the catch-penny miracle-mongers to whom every new fable brings gifts from the more credulous hâjjis.

Having seen these things I pursued my way back to the city in the dusk of the evening.

On several Thursday afternoons I went with Aamir or other acquaintances to visit the cemetery El Bakîa. This place is enclosed by a mud wall, and measures some 200 yards by 120 yards. It lies close to the eastern wall of the city. Ten thousand of the Prophet's Companions are said to be buried in it.

When I entered the Bakîa the sight which I saw was as it were a town which had been razed to the ground. All over the cemetery nothing was to be seen but little indefinite mounds of earth and stones, pieces of timber, iron bars, blocks of stone, and a broken rubble of cement and bricks, strewn about. It was like the broken remains of a town which had been de-

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molished by an earthquake. Against the western wall lay great stacks of old wooden planks, and others of stone blocks, and of iron bars and railings. This was some of the scattered material, which had been collected and stacked in order. A few narrow paths had been cleared in the rubble, so that visitors might make their way to the further parts of the cemetery; but other signs of order there were none. All was a wilderness of ruined building material and tombstones—not ruined by a casual hand, but raked away from their places and ground small.

Demolished and gone were the great white domes which formerly marked the graves of the members of Muhammad's family, of the Third Khalifa, Othmân, of the Imâm Mâlik, and of others. Lesser monuments had suffered a like fate, and even the little cages of jerid sticks, with which the poor cover the graves of their dead, had all been crushed and thrown aside, or burnt.

We went forward to view some of the mounds which now marked the tombs of the early Muslims who had made history. As we walked Aamir murmured continually "I ask pardon of God!" and "There is no power and no strength but in God!" Those few guardians of the tombs who remained stood or sat motionless with faces of stone. They asked no alms, and spoke no word above a whisper, though there were no Wahhâbîs near save two of Ibn Subhân's black slaves at the gate. But some of the Nakhawila were still occupied there in raking out serviceable pieces of wood and other material from among the ruins. These Nakhawila might not bury their own dead among the saints in the Bakîa, but now, under Wahhâbite direction, they had thrown down the tombs of the orthodox Muslimîn.

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We walked up a narrow path which had been cleared in the rubbish, towards Othmân's tomb at the eastern side of the graveyard. As we paced carefully, there met us a party of Indians coming from the tomb of Othmân. He who walked at their head was an old man with a long grey beard. As he walked, with head held erect, his eyes wavered neither to right nor to left. Straight before him he gazed, and tears fell from his eyes in a ceaseless stream. Those who followed him glanced quickly at us in passing, and then looked away again.

We had come upon a slight rise in the ground, and now I saw the cause of the old man's grief. There on the ground before us was a long thin erection, scarcely more than six inches high. It was apparently made of a wooden framework, with rough pieces of tin nailed upon it. This was the tomb of Othmân, the Third Khalîfa. A mound of earth would have been a better monument.

Beside it sat a large-turbaned Indian, chanting the Korân. Another sat near him, sobbing.

Behind the hill Jebel Sal'a, to north-westward of the city, there are five little mosques—El Masâjid el Khamsa—scattered in the valley. One of these is known as the Mosque of the Two Kiblas. It is related that a party of the Bani Salma was praying towards Jerusalem in this mosque when one came in and told them that the Kibla had been changed to Mekka. It had but newly been revealed to Muhammad that the Kibla of the Muslimîn was thenceforth to be the Kaaba. Upon hearing this, these tribesmen of Bani Salma turned about and completed their prayers with their faces turned towards Mekka.

Underneath this mosque there is a well which is reached by means of a flight of steps.

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The tomb-mosque of Shaykh Ali el 'Arīdh lies on the eastern harra, at a distance of some five miles from the Bâb el Bakia. A rough track leads to it, and Aamir and I rode out on donkeys one day to visit it. The mosque is built as strongly as a small fortress, with massive stone walls and an iron door. In normal times the imâm lives in an upper storey with his family, and the place has been built to withstand the assaults of thieving Bedouins.

A hole had been torn by the Wahhâbîs in the wall at the western side of the building, and through this we entered. Inside we found several tombs, all of which had been partly demolished. Several large cut-glass chandeliers, which had formerly been suspended over the graves, now lay smashed to pieces on the ground. Having saluted Shaykh Ali in his grave, and repeated the Fâtiha, we mounted and rode home again.

On our way we passed by the Mesjid el Ijâba. Here Muhammad prayed to God to grant him three requests. The first and second were that He would not destroy the Muslim nation by thirst nor by drowning. These two requests were granted. The third was that the Muslims might not fight among themselves; but this was not granted.

Among many historical small buildings in the plain about El Medîna is the Mosque of the Table, to eastward of the city. Here, say the fable-mongers, God sent down the table loaded with food to Jesus Christ. This incident is related in the Korân, Chapter *The Table*, but no mention is made of El Medîna; nor do the commentators and historians say that it occurred at El Medîna. The Korânic passage is as follows:—

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"When the disciples said: 'O 'Isa son of Mary! Is thy Lord able to send down unto us a table from heaven?'"

"He answered: 'Fear God,* if ye be true believers.'

"Said they: 'We wish to eat from it, that our hearts may be at rest; and that we may know that Thou hast spoken truth† unto us, and that we may be witnesses thereof.'

"Said 'Isa son of Mary: 'O God, our Lord! send down unto us a table from heaven, that it may be a feast‡ unto us: unto the first of us, and unto the last of us:§ and a sign from Thee.¶ Provide Thou for us,§§§ for Thou art the Best of Providers.'

"God said: 'Verily I am sending it down unto you. Therefore, whoever among you shall disbelieve hereafter, I will surely inflict upon him a punishment such as I inflict upon no other creature.' "

The Two Jalâls, quoting Ibn 'Abbâs, tell us that "The angels brought it [the Table] down from heaven: and upon it were seven loaves and seven fishes. Then they ate of it until they were filled." This appears to be another version of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

In different parts of the Manâkha there are several little mosques. These are cool silent places in the heat

* i.e. without asking for signs and wonders.

† In claiming to be a prophet.

‡ That the day of the year on which the table is sent down may be kept as a feast day for ever.

§ Those who come after us.

¶ A sign of Thy power, and of my prophethip.

§§§ Provide Thou this table for us.

PLACES OF VISITATION NEAR EL MEDĪNA

of the day. All are swept and garnished, and have grass mats on the floor. Some of them have small gardens beside them, and green branches of trees may be seen through the iron-barred windows by the sitters within. Among these mosques are the Mesjid el Ghamâma, Mesjid Ali, Mesjid Abi Bakr, Mesjid Mâlik ibn Anas, and the Mesjid Umar.

XXXIV

EL MEDĪNA TO YANBUA

FROM the roof on which I slept a great part of the Manâkha could be seen. On some mornings, when I rose from my bed or when I returned from the Mosque, I saw that that harbour of caravans was full to overflowing with the shugdufs of the hâjjis. On the morrow, perhaps, I would see no sign of life there: the place would be as deserted and silent as the untrodden wastes of the desert.

The caravans bringing Egyptians, Syrians, Turks, and Moors from Yanbua commonly remained eight days at El Medîna; while those from Mekka, bringing Malays, Indians, Bokhârans, and others, usually stayed only five days. The hâjjis from Mekka made the whole journey to and from El Medîna by land; but most of those who came by Yanbua returned to that port, and went down to Jidda by sea.

During their stay in El Medîna, the hâjjis lodged in the houses of their muzawwirs; but a few of them lived in their shugdufs in the Manâkha, in order to save themselves expense. Penurious dervishes spent their days in the Haram, and their nights in secluded nooks in the public streets or in the old alms-houses. There were several of the latter in different parts of the city. They are bequests in mortmain for the benefit of poor travellers. Food was formerly supplied in some of them, in addition to lodging, but in the revolutions of time the funds with which this had been

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purchased have ceased. Such funds were derived in most cases from the rent of dwelling houses in El Medĭna, bequeathed for the purpose, or from the revenue of estates or houses in various parts of the Muslim world. No man knows the number and value of all the waqfs which have been bequeathed to Mekka and El Medĭna in the thirteen centuries of Islām. There is no Islāmic province, from China to Morocco, which does not contain property, or the decayed dust of property, which was once bequeathed to the Haramayn. What and where many of these bequests were, how they ceased to exist as waqfs, by whom embezzled or how decayed, no one knows, save in a few individual cases.

I observed that many parties of Indians, some of them including women, camped in the public streets. These did not devote most of their time to begging, as many solitary poor men did, but wisely turned their energies to washing themselves, to searching for certain tiny members of creation in one another's hair, and to carefully preparing their food. They joked lazily with one another while doing these things, and on the approach of one whom they knew, they would rise and hold his hand softly for long minutes, while they exchanged smiling remarks with him. Some of these poor Indians wore great beautiful turbans of yellow or pink muslin, while the remainder of their garments were in rags. Just such a contrast as this was the beautiful Green Dome of the Prophet, which overtopped the crumbling hovels of his followers. When any person of an affluent and benevolent appearance passed near a party of these Indians, one of their number would rise and beg of him, with a smile or a whine as the occasion seemed to demand.

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA

The first day of the pilgrimage month, Du-l Hijja, dawned while I was still in El Medîna. The Manâkha and all the streets of the city had been almost deserted for several days, for the hâjjis were rallying to Mekka. On the 3rd of Du-l Hijja (14th June) the last caravan left El Medîna for Mekka. This was a party of Medînans mounted on deluls. They would ride by fast stages, and reach 'Arafa in time for the Hajj.

I had arranged to travel to Yanbua in the company of two Medînan youths, Hamdi and Abdul Khâlig, who were petty merchants. Now that the days of my sojourning in Arabia were fast approaching their end, my desire had been to ride to the coast on a delul as expeditiously as might be. But my companions had skins of samn and bundles of carpets which they must take with them. Accordingly we were obliged to hire burden camels.

A few minutes before the hour of el'asr on the 18th of June, Aamir and I loaded my baggage on a camel which had been couched for that purpose in the open space near Bâb es-Salâm. Leaving the Bedouin in charge of the animal to attach it to the kâfila, we then made our way to the Great Mosque, where we performed the afternoon prayer and repeated the salutation to the Prophét. That duty completed, we left the Mosque and proceeded towards the Egyptian Gate. The city was now almost devoid of inhabitants, for, besides the foreign hâjjis, large numbers of the Medînans had gone southward to Mekka for the Pilgrimage. More than half of the shops in the Sûk were closed, their owners having taken loads of merchandise on camels to sell in Mekka.

During my sojourn in El Medîna I had searched in vain for a good supply of the dates for which she is

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famous. The dates being sold in the market at that time were two years old, for the most recent crop had been gathered by the besieging Wahhâbîs. The owners of the trees had been unable to go forth from the city to bring in the fruit. Those old dates in the market were infested with little brown insects.

The date trade of El Medîna is of considerable importance, and quantities of the fruit are exported to Syria, Egypt, India, and other countries. A number of merchants obtain their livelihood solely by buying dates for export. In El Medîna the dates are stored in skins. In the Muhammadan countries, a handful of the dates of El Medîna is regarded as a gift fit for a prince, for they confer a great blessing on the eater. There are said to be seventy varieties of dates grown in the groves surrounding the city. The best sort is a very large date called El 'Anbari, which has a fine flavour. It is extremely scarce and expensive. The second is El Chalabi, a large sweet date. This, being the best of the more plentiful varieties, is the one most in demand among the hâjjis. They take large quantities away with them as presents to friends. The third sort is El Halwa, a very sweet date which is much in favour with the Medînans themselves. The fourth, El Baydh, is egg-shaped, as its name implies. The fifth, Es-Sukkari, is a rather small date, but soft and sweet, which dissolves in the mouth like a piece of sugar. The sixth is a yellow date, Et-Tabarjali. The seventh, El Khudrîya, remains greenish in colour when ripe. The eighth, El Jâwi, is a black date which induces great thirst. The ninth, El-Lubâna, is almost white. The tenth, El Fanad, is red. Other varieties are El Birni, El Ajwa, Esh-Shukrâ, El Wahshi, Es-Sayhâni, and El Maktûmi.

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I had purchased two small tins of Chalabi dates to give to friends in Cairo, and now, as I passed down the Sûk with Aamir for the last time, I looked in the little shops for some more of these. All that remained, however, were Birni and Halwa dates in a worm-eaten condition.

We crossed the Manâkha, and passed down the broad straight street which leads to the Bâb el'Anbarîya. On our right we passed the house of Ibn Subhân, and the Egyptian Soup-kitchen, and on our left the old Turkish barracks. Save for the slaves lounging before Ibn Subhân's door, the long dusty street was deserted.

Passing through the great gate, we found our caravan halted without. A little middle-aged Arab, Ibrâhîm, and his companion, a youth named Suwaylim, sat scratching in the sand with their sticks. They were of the Ahâmida branch of the Harb tribe.

We gave them the salutation of peace, which they, rising, returned. The two merchants had not yet arrived, so we sat on the ground to eat a water-melon which I had in my baggage. I asked Aamir, Would he not like to come with me to Egypt and see the sights of civilisation?

"No, O sir," said he, "my wish is to stay beside the Hujra of the Prophet—Allah bless him and give him peace—until I die, and then I will be buried in El Bakîa, in shâ Allah."

On a former day, sitting in the cloisters of the Mosque, he had told me that his father, being then great of age, had seen the Prophet in a dream. In his dream it seemed to the old man that he stood before the Hujra, and the Prophet, together with Abu Bakr, Umar, and the Lady Fâtima, were standing within.

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And they beckoned to him, and said: "Come thou and dwell beside us."

"The very next morning," said Aamir, "my father sold all his possessions, and, taking me and my mother and my sister with him, he mounted the sea to Alexandria. And after we had reached Mekka and performed the Hajj, he brought us all to El Medîna."

His parents and his sister were now dead: they were all buried in El Bakîa. Aamir's only journeyings now were to Mekka, whenever his hâjjis desired him to accompany them thither at their expense.

El Medîna is a favourite place of residence with the Moors, for the reason that the Imâm Mâlik, whose system they follow, is buried in the Bakîa.

Presently Hamdi and Abdul Khâlig issued from the gate carrying, one a little basket of provisions, and the other a clay waterbottle.

I had remunerated Aamir for the hospitality which I had received in his house on a similar scale to that which I had employed with Abdurrahmân in Mekka. This matter was agreed upon between us beforehand, the custom differing in this respect from that obtaining in Mekka, where the amount of the mutawwif's recompense is usually left to the decision of the hâjji. For the visit to the Hujra I gave Aamir a guinea. He gave thanks to Allah with dignity but without enthusiasm, as he probably would have done had the amount been more or less than it was.

I was sorry to see the last of Aamir. He was a kind and dignified person, and in the present general misfortune he was resigned, and steadfast to remain in the city whence so many had fled in panic. He placed his arm round my shoulders briefly in the Arabian embrace at parting, and with a last wish for my safe

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arrival in my country, he went back into the city, hastening a little in order to reach the Haram in time for the sunset prayer.

The two merchants already sat their beasts.

"Mount, O hâjji!" said Ibrâhîm in the suddenly-busy Bedouin manner.

I climbed to the back of my camel, and the Bedouin led forward. The string of beasts slowly unwound into a straight line, and headed westward.

We passed along by the stone wall of the railway compound, and leaving that behind us, we slowly climbed the black slope of the western harra. At the bottom of the declivity to our left stood a number of isolated houses surrounded by orchards. Farther out on the plain the palm groves stretched for several miles southward. After nearly an hour's ride from the city gate we came to the Mosque of 'Irwa. The sun had now set, and the mountains to westward appeared as monstrous masses of jet upraised before a screen of old gold. Here we halted and dismounted. Looking down the long black slope up which we had toiled, I saw in the distance four slender minarets: three of them were white, and the other was striped with horizontal dark bands. In their midst the Green Dome was barely discernible, and the small minaret of Bâb er-Rahma could no longer be seen. At the northern and western sides of this group of minarets lay masses of flat-topped houses, while from the south and south-east the black and yellow spaces of the desert seemed to break in green surf all about their bases, sending a narrow stream all round the city. Through the up-flung greenness, glimpses of the white city wall appeared at intervals.

Having performed the sunset prayer, we descended

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on foot the steep rocky slope, El Mudarraġ, into the Wādi-l 'Agġ. A small village which formerly flourished at this point was now deserted. Climbing the farther slope, we left the wādi and proceeded westward through a succession of rocky valleys. Curled up on the back of my camel, I managed to sleep most of the night, and upon waking, an hour before dawn, I found the two merchants and the Bedouins still asleep on their animals. When they woke none of them could at first recognise the landmarks about us, but after a little discussion the Bedouins realised where they were. It appeared that, being led by a non-stop sort of camel, our caravan had kept moving throughout the night while we all slept. Unfortunately, the leading animal had not taken the best road. We did not reach Bir Darwish until some two hours before noon—a march of sixteen hours from El Medīna.

Having unloaded our animals, we proceeded to prepare a meal of rice and samn. The Bedouins were sent to collect brushwood for the fire. The merchants spread several beautiful carpets on the sand under an acacia tree, and on these we made ourselves comfortable. A cool breeze blew from the westward, and I contrasted the delightful temperateness of the atmosphere with the terrible heat which I had experienced here on my way up from Mekka.

Immediately after the sunset prayer we mounted and moved off. Our way led through the Wādi-sh Shuhadā. Marching all night, we came to El Mudhġ after sunrise, having taken fourteen hours for the journey from Bir Darwġsh.

El Mudhġ is a circular plain some two miles in diameter. It is enclosed on all sides by high mountains. The wādi bed runs through its southern side, and

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passing through a gap in the mountains to westward, flows down to the coast. The watercourse westward is called Wâdi Safra. At El Mudhîg we found a few Arabs dwelling in huts, or tents, constructed partly of old hair-cloth and partly of rushes. These people cultivate durra on the plain, where the soil is a sandy loam. They obtain water from a spring and from a well.

At el 'asr we left El Mudhîg, and descending into the watercourse, we passed into the narrow entrance of the Wâdi Safra. The breeze had now ceased, or was shut off from us by the towering ramparts of blackened granite among whose bases we travelled. The narrow watercourse extended westward between these walls of rock, which rose above it to a height of from two thousand to four thousand feet. Many a bloody encounter has occurred in that place. The most famous, perhaps, is the battle fought in 1811 between the Wahnâbîs and a Turko-Egyptian force commanded by Tusûn Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali, Ruler of Egypt, in which the Wahnâbîs were completely victorious. After we had crawled slowly forward in the burning atmosphere for an hour, the valley became somewhat wider. In another hour we passed by the small domed mosque of Abdur-Rahîm el Bur'î, an Arabian poet. This lies at the foot of the mountain on the left-hand side of the Wâdi.

On the opposite side lay the village of El Judayyida; and above it, on the hillside, was a small Turkish fort. From this point a grove of palm trees extended along the right-hand side of the watercourse for a distance of nearly two miles. My companions, the merchants, dismounted and ran to the village in order to purchase

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rutab (fresh-gathered dates), but the Bedouins did not halt their camels.

Beyond the village of El Judayyida the wâdi bears to the right, and here we descended a steep declivity beside the palm plantations. A number of springs supply the place with water, which is led in little channels to all the palm gardens. All this part of the wâdi is known as Bughâz el Judayyida.

At sunset we halted for a few minutes in order to give the merchants time to rejoin us. Then, proceeding further, we came to the fort of El Hamra, some five or six miles from the village of El Judiyyida. Here there is a small village and some cultivation of vegetables. We passed by the place in the darkness, and marched westward along a wide shallow watercourse. The hills which now bordered our path were of comparatively low altitude. Later we left the wâdi, and came into a rocky undulating country. Before dawn we reached Bir Sa'id, where we encamped. Here we found several stone huts, and a well of bad water.

In the heat of the day I was now in a sort of dazed lethargy. I had lived as a hâjji in Arabia for more than a year, and the hardships of that life had blunted my sensibilities. While in El Medîna I had thought of visiting Hâil, but I now knew that I should have found little pleasure in the journey, unless I could have recuperated my physical powers before setting out.

We left Bir Sa'id at el'asr, and travelled among low rocky hills for two hours, when we emerged into the spacious coastal plain. Far to our right rose the great dark peak of Jebel Rodhwa, and nearer lay a large yellow sand dune.

Ibrâhîm had told us that we should reach the en-

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campment of his tribe that night, and that we should be his guests for the Feast of Sacrifices.

Now, as we proceeded across the plain, we heard the barking of dogs and the bleating of goats in the evening dusk. I fell asleep on my camel, but was shortly awakened by the animal's stopping. We had reached the encampment of the Ahâmida. Now we dismounted before Ibrâhîm's tent. The poor Bedouin came from his woman's apartment with a wooden bowl full of camel's milk, and bade me and the merchants to drink. Having taken a refreshing draught of this, I crawled beneath the hair-cloth shelter and fell asleep.

At dawn I awoke much refreshed, and proceeded to inspect my surroundings. Our tent was one of a half-score which were pitched in line on the open plain. The ground here was a fine dust of sandy loam, and the only vegetation was camel-grass—a weed which needs scarcely any water. Flocks of goats grazed near the tents, but the camel herds were not in sight. Ibrâhîm sat in the tent preparing his morning coffee: his wife handed him the water-filled coffee-pot and the berries, from under the screen which separated the harîm apartment from the open part of the tent. We drank the good man's coffee, and ate of his dates and our bread from El Medîna.

This day being the Feast of Sacrifices, when the pilgrims slay their meat offerings at Mina, we should not have eaten before performing the Prayer of Festival had we been punctiliously observant of religious forms. But we were now the guests of Bedouins, and among these punctiliousness in such matters is rare.

As the morning advanced, all assembled in a space of ground which had been marked out with stones.

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Here we formed in rows, to repeat the *Salât el'id* (Prayer of Festival)—a special prayer ordained to be repeated on the Feast of Breaking the *Ramadhân* Fast and on the Feast of Sacrifices. A handsome old grey-beard took up his position as *imâm* of the gathering, but when he came to begin the prayers he could not remember whether he ought to say "*Allah Akbar!*" seven times *before* the "*intention,*" or after it. A general argument ensued, in the course of which it became evident that the old man was so extremely doubtful about every detail of the service that it would be better if he did not attempt to conduct it. He stepped back into the front row of worshippers without any loss of dignity, and everybody present invited the two merchants and myself by turns to lead the prayers. I declined the honour for myself, and helped them to push Hamdi gently into the *imâm's* position. Finding himself there, he promptly went through the rite with the townsman's facility; and thereafter, everybody having shaken everybody else by the hand and wished them a blessed feast, we returned to the tents with hungry expectation.

After having lived on scanty commons for the last three days, the merchants and I were now to have food pressed upon us in great quantity. First of all we sat down to eat in *Ibrâhîm's* tent. Assisted by two other *Bedouins*, he brought in an enormous tin dish filled with a great heap of boiled rice on which was deposited about half of a dismembered goat. This they placed on the ground, and going out again, they came back with another similar dish. Then in response to *Ibrâhîm's* brief invitation "*Come lads, eat!*" all those present, being about half the men of the encampment, seated themselves around the two trenchers, and saying

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"Bismillah er-Rahmân er-Rahîm," began to eat. The Bedouins on either side of me broke off pieces of meat from the joints and piled them on the rice before me. I returned the compliment, and by passing some of the tit-bits which I received to others, I managed to keep the pile of provender in front of me within respectable dimensions. I thought, doubtless this will be my last meal before I reach Yanbua on the morrow. Therefore I did not hesitate to avail myself to the full of Ibrâhîm's hospitality. Seeing which, a look of quiet satisfaction came into the eye of my host. By means of frequent brief glances in his direction, I observed that he continually turned an anxious eye towards his townsmen guests; but as soon as he saw that they were little behind the Bedouins in their eager use of the right hand, he looked anxious no longer.

Thinking of my coming journey, I ate for to-day and for to-morrow. I was to regret that I had done so, however, for scarcely had the exclamations of "El hamdu Lillah" ceased in Ibrâhîm's tent, than other Bedouins came to invite everybody to a second feast a few tents further down the line. There was no refusing, so with my companions I assumed the decorous expression of a hungry man who is invited to dine, and accompanied our new hosts to their feast.

We found that it was already spread in the tent of that old shaykh who had unsuccessfully essayed to lead us at prayers. He and another were sitting within the booth. They rose to receive us. Having exchanged salutations, all seated themselves about the dishes, of which there were two. These were placed upon a magnificent silk Persian carpet spread on the sand. I had not seen so fine a carpet in any house of Mekka or El Medîna. Expensive arms and carpets are the

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only articles of great value which are found in the tent of a Bedouin, and these are rare. These valuable carpets are used only on feast days or in the entertainment of distinguished guests. At other times they are not seen, being stowed in hair-cloth sacks, and thus used as cushions.

Now, in response to the old shaykh's repeated invitations, I ate, with great energy and gusto during some quarter of an hour, about a spoonful of rice and an ounce of meat. As fast as my host placed pieces of meat in front of me, I passed other pieces from my pile to my neighbour. At last Abdul Khâlig gave praise to Allah and rose to wash his hands. I delayed no longer to do likewise.

This was not the last of the Bedouins' hospitality, for when we had returned to Ibrâhîm's tent and laid us down to sleep in its shade, there came yet another messenger to invite us to a third feast. My two companions, however, and also Ibrâhîm and his cronies, excused themselves with the plea that they had eaten their fill. Thereafter, we lay and slept in peace among the lambs and kids within the shadow of the tent.

Soon after el'asr the sleepers began to stir, and the merchants urged Ibrâhîm to prepare his camels for the march to Yanbua. The holiday-making Bedouin showed little inclination to move for some time, but finally he sat up and began to make coffee. After we had drunk this, he rose and went forth into the desert, accompanied by Suwaylim, to find his camels. The animals had been turned loose to graze, and were no longer in sight.

It was after sunset when they returned with the beasts, and then a hot dispute arose between them, for Suwaylim wished not to go to Yanbua. He would

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remain in the camp until the morrow, he said, for was not this a day of feasting? After much noisy argument, however, we started at the hour of el 'esha.

Our way lay westwards across the sandy plain. Coming to a well, the Bedouins halted in order to water their animals. I saw numbers of camels wandering about the water-hole in the starlight. Doubtless their owners were encamped near-by.

After leaving this well we marched forward over the plain—which here exhibited a more stony surface—until dawn. As it became lighter, we saw the sea to westward, for our road lay parallel to the shore. Some miles ahead of us, to the north-west, a small collection of houses, clustered together on a low eminence, could be seen. Above their roofs rose two minarets. This was the seaport of Yanbua. To eastward, Jebel Rodhwa rose high into the blue sky.

As the sun slowly mounted, the heat on the salt-encrusted plain increased minute by minute. All about us the naked desert reflected a white glare, so that we moved as it were between two fires. Our refuge, Yanbua, looked as bleached and arid as the surrounding wilderness, while we slowly drew near to it.

At last we crawled through the gateway in the town wall, when our surroundings changed completely. The day was the last day of the Feast of Sacrifices,* and the people of Yanbua were making holiday. They wore their best clothes, and lounged in the coffee-houses, talking and smoking. The Wahhâbî governor of the town was far from being a strict puritan. Later I observed that it was the custom here for many

* The Feast of Sacrifices is on the 10th Du-l Hijja; but throughout the Islamic world, wherever it is possible, the Muslims make holiday on the two following days also (i.e. during the Days of Flesh-drying).

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of the prominent officials to smoke the shîsha while discharging the affairs of their offices. Several of them employed servants to carry their shîshas wherever they went. At a sign from the master the servant would at once place the shîsha on the ground before him, whether he sat in a coffee-house or in his office, and present the mouthpiece to him.

The day being a holiday, nobody cared to give a thought to business, and I experienced some difficulty in finding a place in which to lodge. At last Ibrâhîm discovered an old wakâla (inn) overlooking the harbour. The innkeeper was not at home, so I chose a room on the upper floor and placed my baggage in it. The two merchants had gone to friends in a different part of the town. I now gave Ibrâhîm a present of money and he left me.

Presently the innkeeper, Mahmûd by name, came in. He seemed anxious to make me comfortable, and he prepared some food for me. During the afternoon I slept, while a cool breeze from off the sea blew in through the open casement. At sunset I went with Mahmûd to the mosque, and in the evening I went to find one Ibrâhîm Adham, a Syrian doctor in the Government service, whom I had known in Mekka. This man was now stationed in Yanbua. He knew of my true identity, and he was pleased to see me. He was fond of telling me all about the measures which should be instituted for the sanitation of the Hijâz. Through his mediation I obtained one of the temporary passports which are issued to hâjjis who have lost their papers while in the Hijâz.

After the hour of el 'esha Mahmûd and I sat on kursîs under the arches at one side of the courtyard of the inn. My host had belonged to a military corps of

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camelry recruited by the Turks for the defence of the Hijâz. He described to me how his troop fled from El Wejh when that port was attacked by Faysal's Arabs. With eight companions mounted on deluls he had reached Medâin Sâlih on the Hijâz Railway. Travelling down the railway line towards El Medîna, they had met a caravan of the Anayza at El 'Elâ. With this they travelled to Hâil where they remained as the guests of Ibn Rashîd until the Turks were expelled from El Medîna. Mahmûd then returned to the Prophet's city, and afterwards came to Yanbua to take charge of the wakâla which his father, dying, had left him. The inn had been built a hundred and fifty years before.

Lying on pieces of sacking under the arches, there were two emaciated brown figures. One of them was a destitute Indian hâjji. After visiting the Prophet's tomb he had intended to return to Mekka in time to perform the Hajj. His strength had failed, however, and he had reached Yanbua on his feet in a state of collapse. Now he ate bread and dates at Mahmûd's expense. He would look up at the grave face of the innkeeper with eyes that shone so eloquently with trust and gratitude that it was quite startling to look at him. We debated what should be done with this poor beggar. His name was Ali. One suggestion was to find a captain of a dhow who would take him down to Jidda without payment, so that he might appeal to the British consul for help to return to Bombay. Ali, being called upon to accept or reject this proposal, could not understand what was said to him, for he knew no Arabic. In the course of the discussion it came out that he thought himself to be in Jidda, and he wept in his bewilderment when Mahmûd's assistant, by patting the ground with his hand and repeating the word 'Yanbua' many

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times, at last made him understand where he was. By a lavish display of gesture he was finally informed that it was proposed to send him back to Bombay. No sooner did he comprehend this than he began to blubber copiously, and going down on his knees in front of the innkeeper, he took his hand and repeatedly kissed it and laid his head on it, saying in Arabic: "My father, my father." This word he had doubtless learnt from the camel-men in the way from Mekka, who use it frequently in addressing the hâjjis. Mahmûd, having reassured him with smiles and gestures, giving him to understand that he might remain where he was, the Indian crept away into the shadows and was no more heard.

The other beggar was scarcely more than a brown skeleton. His eyes were deeply sunk in his skull, and every bone in his body showed distinctly under the skin. He was a native of the Yemen, and had travelled to Mekka on foot and performed the Hajj in the previous year. Since then he had been to Et-Tâif and El Medîna, begging for his bread on the way. He was a mere youth, and although he was obviously slowly dying of dysentery, I was struck by the expression of calm determination on his face as he announced in a weak voice his intention to visit Jerusalem, Hebron, and Damascus. The body of that poor fanatic was too weak to stand upright, but the impression I received when talking to him was of strength—the strength of a dauntless spirit, too fine for the poor base clay to keep pace with. He received my alms, giving thanks to Allah in his weak voice.

I slept luxuriously on a kursî on the roof. Mahmûd and a friend of his occupied two other kursîs.

On the following day the *Mansura*, a little coast-

THE HOLY CITIES OF ARABIA

ing steamer of the Egyptian *Khedivial Mail Line*, entered the harbour, and I boarded her. I would travel on her to Port Sudan, and thence by Khartum to Cairo.

Having spoken to the captain, I retired to a cabin which was allotted to me. Here I shaved my chin, and put on a suit of drill and other articles of European dress. Some of these I had purchased in the market-place of Yanbua, and others from the steward of the steamer.

For the first time for more than a year I now ate with a knife and fork. I was still seated at table with my fellow-passengers when the anchor was heaved up and the propellor began to revolve. Presently I left the saloon and leant on the rail to obtain a last view of Arabia. Beyond the blue waters lay the silent yellow plain, and far away to the eastward the high peak of Rodhwa was fading slowly. The steamer had swung round the sandy islet which protects the harbour, and was heading for the open sea.

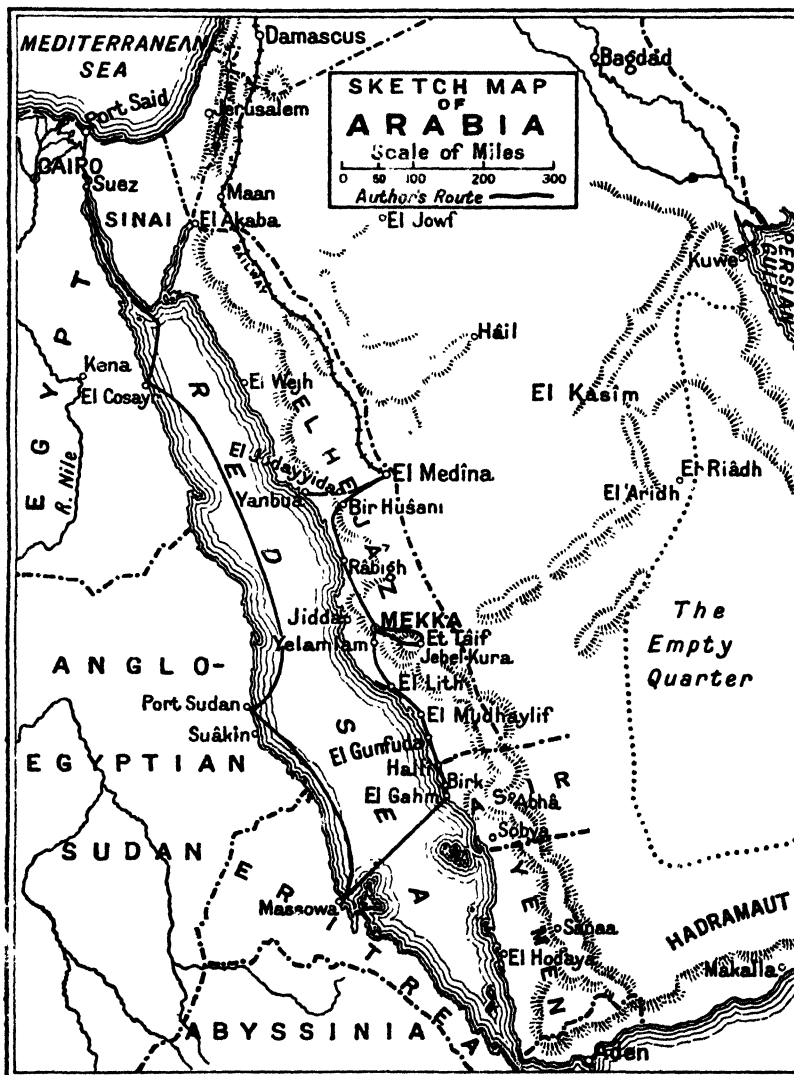
THE END

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A SKETCH MAP OF ARABIA

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